

FLOATING TREASURE



BY
HARRY CASTLEMON





"And if you come over the fence I'll report you also."

FLOATING TREASURE

BY

HARRY CASTLEMON

AUTHOR OF "THE GUNBOAT SERIES," "THE WAR SERIES,"
"ROCKY MOUNTAIN SERIES," ETC.

PHILADELPHIA

HENRY T. COATES & CO.

1901

COPYRIGHT, 1901, BY
HENRY T. COATES & CO.

CONTENTS.

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|---|------|
| I. BAD NEWS, | 1 |
| II. THE NEWS CONFIRMED, | 14 |
| III. FRANK FINDS A FORTUNE, | 27 |
| IV. WHO THE POACHER WAS, | 40 |
| V. A TALK ABOUT THE PRIZE, | 54 |
| VI. TWO CALLERS, | 69 |
| VII. PET WHEELOCK, | 86 |
| VIII. NATURAL HISTORY, | 101 |
| IX. PET WHEELOCK'S MONEY, | 113 |
| X. PET DISCOVERS HIS LOSS, | 128 |
| XI. PET IN LUCK, | 143 |
| XII. SURPRISE ALL AROUND, | 159 |
| XIII. MR. WRIGHT GOES UP, | 175 |
| XIV. THE SHERIFF'S WARRANT, | 190 |
| XV. PUMPING THE PRISONERS, | 206 |
| XVI. FREE ONCE MORE, | 222 |
| XVII. A FIGHT AND ITS RESULT, | 237 |
| XVIII. OFF FOR NEW YORK, | 253 |

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|--|------|
| XIX. ROBINSON, THE DETECTIVE, | 269 |
| XX. THE LAST OF FRANK'S FORTUNE, | 285 |
| XXI. PET IS ASTONISHED, | 299 |
| XXII. THE OLD SAILOR BURNED OUT, | 316 |
| XXIII. ABOUT VARIOUS THINGS, | 333 |
| XXIV. PET GOES TO HIS HAMMOCK, | 349 |
| XXV. MR. BARRY MAKES A SETTLEMENT, | 366 |
| XXVI. CONCLUSION, | 384 |

FLOATING TREASURE.

CHAPTER I.

BAD NEWS.

“**H**HEY! there. Keep on your own side of the fence!”

It was Bob Ingram who spoke, and from the way the words came out it was plain that he was angry about something. It was dark, and he could not see anything that was going on around him; but he knew where the fence was, and his ears told him there was some one on the other side who was making preparations to climb over it. Beyond a doubt it was a poacher, and Bob had been placed there by the owner of that property on purpose to keep such fellows out. There was an abundance of trout on his side of the fence, and to allow those men to cross over with their silken nets, wade down the stream, and drive the fish into them, would be a misfortune indeed.

“You want to keep on that side of the fence, I tell you. This is the third time you poachers have troubled me this week, and I’m getting tired of it.”

Now, there are not many men who like to have the term “poacher” applied to them. They know that a poacher is a scamp wherever found. He is a man who kills game or fish contrary to law. Knowing all the bypaths among the pines and scrub oaks, he robs the streams by night, if he is after fish. There are usually two poachers in company. They set their net across a narrow place in the stream, and while one attends to it the other drives in the trout. The meshes of the net are so small that a two-ounce fish cannot escape. Before daylight the poachers are back at their homes, and easily sell the fish to some one who believes as they do, and they are shipped off to the New York markets. The trout being in season, no questions are asked. It is hard to lay the blame upon the poachers, because the men who own houses near them and the men who own the hotels are afraid to inform against them. They well know that

the men would, in revenge, add arson to poaching.

This was the kind of men that Bob Ingram was obliged to face ; and before we get through with him you will see that he had courage, and plenty of it, too, as was shown by his standing up before them as he did. When he uttered his warning a conversation ensued on the other side of the fence, and by the time the words reached Bob's ears they sounded exactly as though the men were swearing. The grumbling talk they had with one another continued for a few minutes, and then a hoarse voice inquired,

“Is that you, Bob Ingram?”

“Yes, it is. I have been put here to keep you men on that side of the fence, and I want you to stay there, too.”

“Now, I'll tell you what's a fact,” said one of the men, forcing his way through the bushes until he could lay his hand on the topmost rail—“you want to get away from there.”

“No, I don't; I'm going to stay right here.”

“Well, hold on till I get through talking,” added the man. “I have something hanging over you that you don’t know anything about.”

“You haven’t got anything hanging over me that will force me to neglect my duty,” said Bob; “so you might as well keep it to yourself.”

“I suppose you don’t know that I have a mortgage on your mother’s place?” continued the poacher.

“*You* have?” inquired Bob; and anyone could see that he was very much surprised. “How did you come by a mortgage on my mother’s place?”

“Yes, sir, I have; I bought it on purpose to keep you from stopping me when I want to catch fish.”

“When did you get that mortgage?” repeated Bob, who was not certain that his ears were not deceiving him.

“I bought it the other day from Mr. Barry, and paid three hundred and twenty-five dollars for it. Now I guess you’ll go away and let me alone.”

Bob could hardly believe that he had heard

aright. Here was a misfortune indeed, and he resolved that before the next day passed he would call upon the man who owned the mortgage and find out if the poacher had told him the truth. He did not believe that Mr. Barry was ever so hard pressed for money that he would offer one of his mortgages for sale, especially to such a man as the poacher; and, more than all, he was inclined to doubt that his mother owed as large a sum of money as the poacher had mentioned. He supposed she would have to pay about two hundred and fifty dollars, and that then she would be free from all debt and the place on which she lived would be her own.

Russell, the poacher, evidently knew what was passing in the boy's mind, for he hastened to add,

"Old Barry got hard up for money, so he sold me the mortgage. Now I guess you'll go off and pay no attention to me—won't you?"

"No, I won't," said Bob, desperately; "I shall stay right here, and if you come over that fence I'll report you to Mr. Adams."

This decision, which was made as soon

as Russell got through talking, created some surprise on the part of the poachers, for they did not say anything to him immediately but again held a low consultation. Of course the swear words came distinctly to Bob's ears, but that was all he heard. Finally Russell called out,

"Bob, don't you know that that man is getting more trout every day than there are in all the streams on the Island? He is up at the Adirondacks now, and there are more trout up there than he can catch."

"I can't help where he is now," said Bob; "he put me here to guard these fish, and I'm going to do it."

"All right!" replied Russell, and it was evident that he was about as angry as he could be; "you'll think differently when you see your mother moving out of that house. I'll give you two weeks in which to pay up the mortgage, and if you don't pony up every cent of it you'll have to get out of there—mind that!"

The poacher let go his hold on the fence, and he and his companion went back into the

bushes ; while Bob, after listening for a few minutes, seated himself on the ground at the foot of a tree and thought about the unwelcome news that Russell had brought him. It was only about one o'clock, so he had four long hours to remain in the woods before he could go home and talk to his mother and his brother Frank about the matter.

Frank was a year older than Bob, and made a precarious living by fishing in the bay. Sometimes he would make fifteen or twenty dollars by a day's work ; and then, again, for a week or two he would not make a cent. The bluefish would fight shy of his hook, and his most skillful trolling failed to bring a single one into his boat.

The two boys worked early and late, to assist their mother in paying off the mortgage ; but Bob earned only seventy-five cents a night for keeping watch over Mr. Adams's grounds, while Frank could pay in his money only once every week or two, and it was not to be supposed that it would go very far toward clearing off the indebtedness.

Mr. Ingram was dead—he had been a fish-

erman during his life, and was washed overboard from the very boat that Frank sailed on his fishing excursions—but while he lived he had procured a comfortable little home in Middleport, and had it all paid for with the exception of this mortgage, which was now hanging over his family. The thought that they had anything to fear from this debt never once entered their minds.

Mr. Barry seemed to have all the money he wanted, the mortgage had been due for over two years, and the owner of the mortgage had never been near them. Whenever Mrs. Ingram had a few dollars that she could spare she went to Mr. Barry with it, and he always told her that if she wanted the money for any particular purpose she could take it and welcome. But there was one point the Ingram family had never thought of, and they found it out that very day.

“Three hundred and twenty-five dollars!” said Bob, over and over again, as if he could not understand how his mother’s indebtedness could have increased to such an amount during the last two months. “I’ll never believe

we owe Mr. Barry so much money. And why did he sell the mortgage to that poacher? Don't he know that Russell is the biggest scoundrel in Middleport? My goodness! I wish it would hurry up and come daylight. I must see mother and Frank about it."

But all Bob's wishing did not bring daylight any sooner. He arose to his feet, visited the four trout streams which flowed through Mr. Adams's grounds from the enclosed estate beyond, and sat down to keep watch—all the time repeating what the poacher had said to him. At length the robins began to carol in the trees, and shortly afterward he could see daylight through the branches over his head.

Day was coming at last, and this brought Bob to his feet and set him to making the rounds of the trout streams once more. Nobody had molested them while he was on watch that night—in fact there were few people in Middleport that cared to go on Mr. Adams's property, for they knew that Bob was fearless, and that he would report them, no matter what happened to himself—and with a sigh of relief he set out for home.

It was two miles to where he lived ; and when he got within sight of the place, and saw what a cozy, comfortable home they had, and thought how happy they would be if their indebtedness was paid off and Frank could give up fishing, he felt angry with Russell for buying the mortgage, and for no other purpose than because he wanted Frank and Bob away from there, so that he could fish Mr. Adams's trout streams to his heart's content—for Bob knew that was what he had in mind.

“I just wish there was some way by which I could make enough to pay him up in full when he comes after it,” said Bob. “But what is there that Frank and I can do? If we could get that boat full of fish every day for the next two weeks it wouldn't begin to pay old Russell's demand. I tell you, this thing of borrowing money from rich folks don't pay.”

When Bob reached the gate he noticed that the front door was open, and through it he could see Frank engaged in setting the table on the back porch, which was the place where they always ate their meals when alone. It

was cooler there than it was in the house, and the porch was used as a living room by all the members of the family.

Frank was a boy that one would hardly expect to meet outside of a city. He bore the impress of an athlete, and looked as though he had been accustomed to physical training all his life. His coat was off, and his muscles showed to the best advantage. His chest was deep, his shoulders broad, and he moved as if he were set on springs. The face he turned toward the door when he heard Bob's step on the porch was a good-natured one, and he smiled when he saw his brother approaching; but the smile gave place to a different expression when he saw what a look there was on the boy's countenance.

"What's the matter, old fellow?" inquired Frank; "you must have seen some poachers last night."

"I didn't see any, but I heard them," said Bob, drawing a chair to the edge of the porch. "One of them was Russell, but I don't know who the other one was. He told me some news that I didn't like to hear."

Just then Mrs. Ingram came out on the porch with her arms filled with dishes. After placing them on the table she went over and kissed Bob, and then something that would do for a smile came into his face.

"What was that bad news you heard?" asked his mother.

"Russell has bought the mortgage on the place," answered Bob.

Frank was so surprised that he put down the knives and forks, which he had been distributing at the different plates, and looked at his brother without speaking.

"That is what he says, at any rate," continued Bob. "He paid three hundred and twenty-five dollars for it, and he tried to hold it over me as a whip with which to drive me away and let him fish the trout streams."

"You didn't, of course?" asked Frank.

"You bet I didn't," said Bob indignantly. "I told him I was going to stay right where I was, and that if he came over that fence I would report him to Mr. Adams."

"You did right. But how did he come to speak to you about the mortgage?"

Bob settled back in his chair, and in a few words gave the result of his interview with Russell. When he got through, his mother was too surprised to speak, and Frank did not have any remark to make, but there was an expression on his face that Bob had not often seen there.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEWS CONFIRMED.

BOB had said all that was needed to make Frank as angry as he could be. He did not say much, for the angrier he got the quieter he kept; but when he took up the knives and forks again he handled them as though they were made of iron.

"It seems to me that Russell wants to get us away from here so that he can fish those trout streams," continued Bob.

"Well, he shan't do it," replied Frank.

"But I don't owe Mr. Barry any such sum as that," remarked Mrs. Ingram.

"That's what I thought," said Bob; "you are indebted to him about two hundred and fifty dollars."

"That is every cent I owe him."

"Well, I thought that as soon as I got breakfast I would walk down and see Mr. Barry about it. In that way I'll find out

whether or not Russell told me the truth. Frank, I wish you could go, too."

"I can't go until to-morrow; this is my lucky day at fishing, and I must make the most of it. You go down there and see him, and then we shall know what to do."

"Why, Frank, what is there that you can do?" asked Mrs. Ingram, trying her best to keep back her tears. "You can't earn money enough to pay that mortgage."

"Russell says he'll be after the money in two weeks, and we must pay him cash in hand or make up our minds to get out of the house," said Bob.

"Mother, isn't breakfast ready yet?" asked Frank. He spoke cheerfully enough, but Bob saw that he was ill at ease. "You know I have a good ways to go, and the sooner I start the sooner I shall get there."

Breakfast was now ready, and the boys sat down to it; but they made no remarks, for they did not want to add to the worriment of their mother, who seemed almost overwhelmed with astonishment and grief, for she did not know what had happened to Mr. Barry, to in-

duce him to sell that mortgage, unless it was because he had received more than was due on it. This was one thing she had on her mind, but she did not mention it; but, if the truth must be told, some thoughts very much like these troubled Frank and Bob—so much so that they wanted to get by themselves and talk the matter over. At length Frank pushed away his chair and arose from the table.

“Good-by, mother,” said he; “you needn’t expect me home until dark, for I expect to catch fish—no end. Now, don’t let what Russell said to Bob bother you.”

“I will try not to,” replied his mother with a smile; “but this home, you must remember, is all we have. Where shall I go and what shall I do if we lose it?”

“You forget that you have two boys to take care of you,” answered Bob.

“And don’t you forget that the sea may throw some money into our pockets,” said Frank. “That old ocean has helped more than one man out of a tight place, and I just know there’s a fortune in its depths waiting for me.”

Mrs. Ingram always smiled when Frank talked to her in this way. Of course he did not believe it, but it gave him something to talk about and her to occupy her mind with while he was out of sight of land.

"You would be surprised if you should see me coming home with a whole cart-load of gold,—wouldn't you?" continued Frank, bending over to kiss his mother good-by.

"No, I should not. You have brought home many a dollar for me in that boat, and who knows but that you may hit that gold mine which you have so often talked about?"

"Well, you just wait until I come back to-night; I'll have something besides money for you, though I confess it would be a nice thing if we could shake a handful of greenbacks under Russell's nose when he comes here with that mortgage."

Mrs. Ingram went out to the gate with the boys, and watched them while they disappeared in the little patch of timber land that lay between the house and the beach, and then she went back to the porch, leaned her head on her arms, and cried softly to herself. It

was all she could do to control her emotions while the boys were there, but Frank was so enthusiastic about the fortune the sea was going to send him that she smiled in spite of herself; but, now that she was alone, she could give full vent to her feelings.

The boys kept on until they were out of sight in the woods, and then turned and looked at each other. They were both of them very angry; it was plain enough to see that.

"I wish you would go over that interview again," said Frank. "I didn't pay much attention to it while you were telling it in mother's hearing. Did Russell act as though he was fooling you?"

"No, sir—he didn't; he talked right ahead, as though he knew what he was trying to tell me."

Bob went over the conversation again for Frank's benefit, and the latter was obliged to confess that Russell told the truth; but what could have induced Mr. Barry to part with that mortgage was something they could not understand.

"It's my opinion he sold it because he got

more for it than he would have received if he had let mother pay it," said Frank, after he had taken some time to think the matter over.

"That's my opinion, too; but why he should sell it to such a man as Russell beats me. And Mr. Barry is never hard up for money. Here's your skiff. Jump in and I'll take you out to your boat, and then I'll go down and see about the matter. Until this thing came up I was awful sleepy, but now I don't believe I could close my eyes in slumber if I should try."

The skiff, which had been drawn up on the beach, bottom up, was turned, and the oars were put in place. The little patch of woodland had been left by Mr. Ingram during his lifetime to serve as a windbreak against the southeastern gales that prevailed during the winter, and the waters of the bay extended close up against it. When the tide was out their skiff was a long way from water, but on the present morning they did not shove their boat more than a quarter of a mile until it was afloat. Another quarter of a mile away

was Frank's fishing-boat, which was anchored there at all times, so that she could have plenty of water to ride in, let the wind blow never so hard. Toward this boat Bob pulled the skiff, while Frank sat in the stern-sheets and grumbled lustily at Russell.

"If he thinks he's going to get rid of us by selling us out of house and home he'll miss his guess by a long way," stated Frank, doubling up his right fist and striking the palm of his left hand with it. "I'll have to go fishing, all the same, and you'll have to look out for Mr. Adams's trout streams; so I don't see how he is going to make anything by it."

"It may not be true," said Bob, who always wanted to look on the bright side of things; "I can tell better after I see Mr. Barry."

"Well, you see him. I shall be in a flutter all day long until I find out just how the land lies."

In a few minutes Bob reached the boat and Frank clambered out. The boat was not a handsome one, but she was staunch and seaworthy—the gale in which Mr. Ingram lost his

life was the hardest one seen on that beach for several years—and consequently Frank took great pride in her. He had been out at sea with all sails set when other boats, better fitted for rough weather than his own, were racing for cover. Bob made the skiff's painter fast to a cleat and went aboard the boat to assist his brother in hoisting the sail. This was a work of considerable difficulty, for the canvas was heavy; but it was accomplished at last, and Frank shook his brother by the hand as though he was not going to see him again and then caught up the anchor-rope.

“Now, remember that I want you to learn everything you can about that man, and be ready to tell me everything he says to you when I come back. Good-by.”

Bob pushed off from the boat and watched Frank while he unfastened the anchor-rope, went back, and took the tiller in his hand. In a short space of time the boat was under way, and with a farewell wave of his hand Frank held toward the bar at the entrance of the bay, while Bob kept on to the shore.

"I wish I had half the confidence that Frank feels," said the boy, as he put all his strength in the oars. "He is hopping mad, though he doesn't seem to care if Russell sells us out of house and home or not. But how can the sea throw up a fortune for him? I have lived here on the bay ever since I was born, my father followed fishing steadily for thirteen years, and all he saved was money enough to build that house, which we stand a fine chance of losing. Now, the next thing for me is to go and see Mr. Barry."

After a time Bob ran the bow of his skiff up on the beach, made the painter fast to a convenient sapling so that the next high tide would not carry it away, and started toward the house. His mother, hearing him coming, got up and began to clear away the table, but she did not turn her face toward Bob, as she usually did; the telltale tears on her cheeks would have betrayed her.

"Mother, you have been crying again," said Bob.

"How can I help it?" she asked, turning her face full upon the boy, revealing eyes that

were filled with tears. "This house is all I have, and you boys will not let me go out to work."

"If you stay at home and attend to things it's all the work you need do," said Bob emphatically. "You would look pretty, going about washing,—wouldn't you? You can't do that work while you have two boys to take care of you—you may depend upon that. But, mother, I don't believe Russell told the truth."

"There is only one way for you to find out, and that is to go down to Mr. Barry and ask," answered Mrs. Ingram.

"And that's just what I'm going to do as soon as I change my clothes," said Bob. "Now promise me that you won't worry about it any more until I come back."

His mother said she would try to think about something else, although she knew it was impossible for her to do so, and Bob went up stairs to his room. When he came down again he looked very unlike the boy who had ascended the stairs a few moments before. He looked like a young gentleman—not like one

who had been hired for seventy-five cents a night to walk over grounds and keep Russell, and others who believed as he did, on their own side of the fence. He took leave of his mother, began to whistle, and started down the road toward Mr. Barry's; but as soon as he was out of sight of the house he stopped whistling, and walked on silent and thoughtful. Before he had gone a mile on his journey he discovered a couple of boys approaching on bicycles. One of them was Mr. Barry's son, Lon, and the other was a chum of his, Elmer Payne, by name, who was with him almost all the time. They were somewhat higher in the social scale than Bob, and whenever they addressed him at all they tried to make him see that they regarded him as their inferior. They pulled up and got off their wheels when they saw Bob approaching.

"What has happened to you?" asked Lon. "You are dressed up fit to kill. Frank must have caught a lot of fish since you have been down here. The last time I saw you, your clothes were not fit for a rag-bag."

"Well, I don't know that it's any concern

of yours whether Frank has caught fish or not," said Bob; but his face grew a little red when reference was made to his clothes. "He takes all the fish he can sell, and that is more than you do."

"I know what you are coming down here for," sneered Lon, who was mad in a minute; "you are going to see father about that mortgage. I can save you the trouble—it is sold."

"What do you know about it?" asked Bob.

"I ought to know all about it, for I was with father when he made the bargain; he got seventy-five dollars more than he would have received had he let your mother pay it."

The boys leaned on their wheels and looked at Bob to see what he thought about it; but the expression on the boy's face never changed a particle; he was already plunged into gloom as deeply as he could get.

"I should think your father might have told us that he wanted to sell the mortgage," said Bob.

"Oh, I don't know that that was necessary," replied Lon; "the mortgage has been due for over two years, and father had to have the

money. I'll tell you another thing, while I am about it: I urged him to take it."

This was all Bob wanted to hear; he hung down his head and once more set off for Mr. Barry's house.

CHAPTER III.

FRANK FINDS A FORTUNE.

“**H**OLD on, Bob—don’t go away yet!” exclaimed Lon Barry, “for I have a proposition to make, and if you know when you’re well off you will accept it.”

Bob stopped and turned around, for he wanted to hear what that proposition was. Lon hesitated a moment, for he did not know how to so form it that it would not be rejected on the spot. It was something he had never tried on Bob before, and he did not know just how to go about it.

“You see, I have a good deal of influence with Russell, and I think I can make him hold fast to that mortgage until you’re ready to pay it,” said Lon. “Such things are done every day, and I don’t think it would be wrong for you to listen to it.”

“What do you want me to do?” asked Bob.

“If you’ll go away of nights, and let him

get over that fence and fish the trout streams on Mr. Adams's grounds, I think I can make him keep still about that mortgage," replied Lon, who looked down at the ground when he said this, for he did not want to see the expression that came over Bob's face.

"And what report shall I make to Mr. Adams?" retorted Bob. "He'll come up here, with a party of friends, to whip the trout streams, and there won't be a trout in them."

"Oh, you can tell him some tale that will satisfy him," said Payne, who had not spoken before. "Tell him that you watched the brooks carefully, and you can't see where the trout went."

"And tell him a lie?"

"Why, yes; I suppose that's what some folks would call it. But what harm can it do? He goes off to the mountains every summer—he is off there now—and he has more trout fishing than he wants."

"Well, if that's all the proposition you have to make me I'll go on," answered Bob, who was amazed that any one should attempt to try bribery on him.

"Then you won't do it?" asked Lon Barry.

"No, sir. If Russell comes over that fence I'll report him as soon as Mr. Adams comes home; and if you come over that fence I'll report you, also."

"Me!" exclaimed Lon, growing very red in the face. "Why, I have nothing to do with his poaching."

"I don't believe you have, but it's well to be on the safe side," replied Bob, who was a little surprised by the way Lon looked at him. "You seem to be interested in Russell having a clear field, and I don't know what else to make of it but that you're a poacher yourself."

"Well, I'm not!" exclaimed young Barry in a tone of voice which implied that he was very indignant; but his speech showed that he was badly frightened. "Remember—if you refuse, Russell will sell you out inside of two weeks."

"And another thing," said Payne; "perhaps we can promise that Russell will give you enough to make your pay a dollar and seventy-five cents a night. Of course he

doesn't want you to stay away from the grounds for nothing."

"Of course," assented Lon—"he'll give you a dollar extra. If you won't do it, you'll have to get out of that house."

"Well, let him try that on," answered Bob, with more spirit than he had thus far shown in his conversation with the two boys; "I'll bet you he won't make all he's working for."

"What do you mean by that? You'll have to go away from here."

"There is where you're mistaken. We'll rent a house somewhere about here, and I'll keep on watching Mr. Adams's grounds just as I have done heretofore. And I'll bet you, further, that Russell won't come over that fence, either."

Bob did not want to talk any more, for he felt he was getting so angry that he might say something he would be sorry for, and he resumed his walk.

"You don't need to go down to see father," young Barry again remarked; "but if you do, you'll find that I have told you the truth, for he will tell you just what I have told you."

Bob did not answer, for he was determined to get the truth of the matter from Mr. Barry himself. He increased his pace, and in half an hour walked through the gate and up the steps that led to the veranda. The door stood open, and in response to his pull at the bell he heard Mr. Barry's step on the stairs. When he came within sight, Bob gave him a good looking over.

"I don't see why I came to place so much faith in that man," thought he; "he don't have that hooked nose for nothing, and he acts like a man who would do anything for money. If he saw a good chance to cheat anybody that owed him, I'll bet he would jump at it."

Mr. Barry smiled, as he always did when he saw Bob, and greeted him in a voice which in some way or other made cold chills creep along his back. It was a shrill, piping voice, which did not belong to a man of his build.

"Well, Bob, how are you?" said he; "you look as though you have lost everything in the world that is worth living for. What's the matter?"

"Mr. Barry, I want to know if you have sold that mortgage to Russell?" answered Bob. "I heard that you had, and I came down here to get at the facts of the case."

"Well, ye—yes, I have," replied Mr. Barry, running his hands into his pockets and looking up and down the road. "You see, Mr. Russell offered me a good deal more than it was worth, and I am hard pressed just now; seventy-five dollars don't grow on every bush."

"I should think you might have told mother before selling it," suggested Bob; "you have always got your interest regularly."

"I don't know whether it is according to law or not that I should tell you before selling it," said Mr. Barry. "You see, the mortgage has been due for two years, and I have never found any fault with you; I wanted the money, and so I took it."

"Russell says he'll sell us out in two weeks."

"Well, that is bad," said Mr. Barry, looking down at the ground. "He told me you

could take your time in paying it, just as you had done before. I didn't think he would sell you out."

"Did Lon ask you to take the money?"

"I don't know how you found that out, seeing that he was the only one with me when I made the bargain, but he did. He said your mother never could pay it, and that I had better get it off my hands."

"I know what Russell wants that mortgage for, but I tell you he's going to slip up on it," answered Bob bitterly. "He told me this morning that if I didn't go away and let him fish those trout streams he would push that mortgage against me; but I didn't go away—I stayed right there, and was ready to report him or anybody else who came over that fence."

"You did perfectly right and proper," said Mr. Barry, encouragingly. "You say that Russell will slip up on what he tries to do. What do you mean by that?"

"He is making calculations to drive us away from here, but that is one thing he can't do; neither can he bribe me with the hope

of larger pay to let him fish those trout streams."

"Why, is anybody trying to bribe you?" asked Mr. Barry, becoming interested. "But I think Adams pays you a very trivial sum for watching his grounds; and if I were you, and could make anything extra, I wouldn't hesitate to do it."

"I would," said Bob, greatly surprised to hear Mr. Barry talk in this way. "I have to meet mother and Frank every day, and I couldn't look them in the face after doing a thing like that. Mr. Adams has always been my friend, and I always want to keep him such."

"You will never be worth a cent as long as you feel that way," replied Mr. Barry, going into the house and closing the door. "I take money wherever I can get it."

"I believe you do," thought Bob to himself, as he went down the steps and took his way toward home, "and I feel disgusted with myself that I didn't find that out before. Lon is like his father—he'll take money wherever he can find it; and I would just as soon be-

lieve he had a hand in that poaching business as not."

Bob felt downhearted and discouraged as he walked toward home. Fortunately he did not meet anybody on the road, and consequently he was able to commune with his own thoughts. He had always considered this a beautiful world, but now everything seemed to be at variance. A sparrow, pursued by a hawk, fluttered almost in his face; and the hawk would have caught it, too, if Bob had not raised his arms and frightened him away—reminding him of Russell and his mortgage. His mother was almost in the same position as the sparrow; but who was to come along and scare Russell away?

"There's only one thing about it," mused Bob, when he went up to meet his mother, who stood at the top of the steps; "Frank must rake up that fortune from the depths of old ocean pretty soon, or we'll be without a house to shelter us." "It's no go, mother," he said aloud; "the mortgage has been sold to Russell, and we can expect him in two weeks. If he gives me a dollar a night for

letting him come over that fence, I believe I'll tell him to come over."

Bob had never seen his mother look at him in such a way before.

"Bob!" she exclaimed; "you surely have no intention of doing anything of the kind."

"Why, just see how much money I'll get. Lon Barry said he thought Russell would let up on the mortgage and pay me something, and in the meantime we may make a dollar or two to pay on our indebtedness. Now, mother, don't cry," added Bob, seating himself on the top step beside her. "If Russell doesn't fish those trout streams until I tell him to, he'll be a great deal older than he is now!"

"Then you don't intend to take his money?"

"Nary a time!" retorted Bob, as if he felt a little provoked at his mother for thinking such a thing. "I'm only repeating what Lon Barry said to me. The place is gone, there are no two ways about that, and now it will be for you and Frank to talk over things, and see what we are going to do next. It's pretty

near twelve o'clock, isn't it? I believe I'll eat a lunch and then get some sleep. I must be wide awake while such a man as Russell is around."

Bob followed his mother into the house, not because he was hungry, for his experience of the morning had taken all his appetite away from him, but for the reason that he desired to appear indifferent as to what the poacher intended to do with the mortgage. His food was bread and milk. He ate it as if it afforded him satisfaction, although he confidently expected that each mouthful he took would choke him, and then said that before lying down he would go and see if his brother had come back. Frank often made his best catches in the early part of the day, and he might be waiting for his boat to bring him off.

"I'm glad to see that mother didn't look as downhearted as I supposed she would," Bob remarked to himself as he took his way through the timber land toward the beach. "The best thing she could do, if she only thought so, is to submit, and let us do the best we can. When I am alone, I can act as I please."

When Bob reached the beach he found that Frank was there and waiting for him. His fishing-boat was at anchor far out in the bay, and when Bob appeared on the beach a figure arose from the stern-sheets and waved his hat. Bob waved his hat in return, and then set about getting the skiff afloat. This was a matter of some difficulty. The tide was out, and Bob worked an hour before he got the skiff down to the water. He was another half hour in rowing out to where his brother was, for the breeze had sprung up and he had a head sea to face; but long before he thought he was within hail of Frank he heard his voice coming to him over the waters.

“Congratulate me, Bob!” shouted Frank, throwing his hat high in the air and catching it when it came down. “You didn’t think the sea had a fortune in store for me—did you? Well, I have it!”

“How many fish did you get?” asked Bob, resting on his oars and turning around to face Frank.

“Not one! I’m as dry of fish as when I went away.”

"Then show me your fortune!" called Bob.

"It's too big for me to hold up; come here and look at it."

Bob dropped his oars into the water again and pulled up close to the fishing-boat. There was something there, but it was covered with a tarpaulin which Frank generally used to protect his fish from the fierce rays of the sun.

"I don't see anything," remarked Bob.

"Lift up the tarpaulin and you'll see it easy enough," said Frank. "Russell can come and sell out our home as soon as he feels like it; but before he does that, I'll see his three hundred dollars and go him three hundred dollars better."

Filled with wonder, Bob seized one corner of the canvas and looked under it. The sight that met his gaze almost took his breath away. He threw down the tarpaulin and looked at Frank with a face in which surprise had given place to the utmost astonishment. The boy had found his fortune, sure enough.

CHAPTER IV.

WHO THE POACHER WAS.

“**N**OW you see how much you made out of Bob Ingram—don’t you?” snarled Elmer. “I told you it would be of no use to try a bribe on him. He has an idea that he must live strictly up to his business or he won’t amount to anything in this world.”

“How independent he is!” sneered Lon.

“I’ll bet you he’ll haul in his horns by the time Russell gets ready to sell him out.”

The two boys were ready to get on their wheels, but stopped to gaze after Bob Ingram, who was walking along as if he felt at peace with himself and all the world. He no longer hung his head; he was not conscious of having done any wrong, and he moved with his eyes straight to the front, as if he were willing to meet anybody’s gaze.

“He must have been right there at the fence when they attempted to get over it,”

said Elmer, mounting his wheel. "It's lucky we were not with them last night."

"You're right," replied Lon with a laugh; "I wouldn't have that man Adams know we caught trout on his grounds for fifty dollars."

"Well, there is your father."

"The old man? I would just as soon he would know it as not. He says Adams has no business to post his grounds and keep the poor people from fishing on them; and I say so, too. I hope Russell or somebody else will think up some way to steal every fish he has. That fellow holds his head up most too high for a newcomer here."

The boys were fairly under way by this time, and they went ahead as though they knew where they were going, but they did not cease to talk about Bob and Frank; and they did not say any good of them, either. There was only one thing they found against the brothers, and that was, they were a little too independent to have around. Bob certainly needed money badly enough, and he ought to be willing to take Russell's offer of a dollar a night to keep away from that fence.

"Oh, let him go," said Lon in disgust; "he thinks he's mighty smart now, but wait until his mother is sold out. We must urge Russell to go at it at once."

While the boys were talking in this way they came to a little house by the roadside and dismounted from their wheels. It was by no means as comfortable a place as Bob Ingram lived in. It was built of unpainted boards, the gate hung by a solitary hinge, and the chimney, from which smoke was coming, had blown over on the roof. The bricks were there yet, thus proving that the man who lived in the dilapidated structure was so busy at something or other that he had not had time to clear them away. No man would have taken this to be the home of the poacher who had volunteered to give Mr. Barry an additional seventy-five dollars over the value of the mortgage which Mrs. Ingram was trying so hard to pay off. But the boys had evidently made no mistake, for when a dirty, unkempt woman came to the door to find out who the visitors were, Lon greeted her as though he had seen her before.

“ Good-morning,” said he. “ Is Mr. Russell at home ?”

“ Yes,” was her reply, “ and he is just getting ready to go to bed.”

“ That shows he was out somewhere last night,” snickered Lon ; “ but he don’t want to go to bed yet. If he’ll come out here and talk to us, we can tell him some things that will help his business along.”

The woman disappeared, and presently a bareheaded and barefooted man came to the door. He was what might have been expected from his surroundings, and you would have looked a long way to find a man whom you would have less trusted with the smallest sum of money. It is true he lived miserably, but then he saved something from the proceeds of his poaching, and for that reason he was held in some sort of respect by such men as Mr. Barry. It was plain that his wife had told him who the visitors were, for he came down the steps to meet them.

“ Halloo ! boys,” he cried ; “ what’s up ?”

“ How many trout did you catch yesterday ?” asked Elmer.

"Well," said Russell, looking up and down the road to make sure that no one else was coming, "Perkins and I were out pretty near all night, and we got about ten dollars' worth—five dollars apiece. I shipped them to New York this morning."

"Why didn't you go over on Mr. Adams's grounds?" inquired Lon; "you could have got more there."

"I ain't ready to see the inside of a jail yet," answered Russell with a laugh; "Bob Ingram was there."

"What do you care for him? Did you tell him about the mortgage you hold against his mother?"

"Yes; but what good did it do? He said he would report me if I went over the fence; and he'd do it, too."

"Well, you have the mortgage, and if you don't begin on him within two or three days I shall be surprised at you. Say!—why didn't you offer him some money if he would go away and let you alone?"

"I didn't think of it; and, besides, it would have done no good if I had. This is Thurs-

day, and if he don't bring in that money by two weeks from to-day——”

“Why did you put it off so long?” asked Lon, and anybody could see that he was angry about it. “If you had told him that day after to-morrow you would sell him out, you would have been all right.”

“That's so,” replied Russell, after thinking a moment; “but I gave him two weeks, and of course I'll have to live up to it.”

“You could be pressed for money, the same as my father was, could you not?”

“Sure!” chuckled Russell, “and I'll think about it. But your father was not pressed for money; he has more than he can use.”

“Where did he get it?” queried Lon, somewhat surprised at the poacher's knowledge of his father's finances.

“Well, I know where he got some of it. There's the money he gets from Pet Wheelock every quarter. Of course he doesn't spend that.”

“Pet Wheelock!” exclaimed Lon, more astonished than ever; “does father get any money from him?”

"Of course he does. You see, when Pet lost his leg during the war your father went to work and got him a pension of fifty dollars a month, and Pet thought it would be best to deposit the money with him. Pet doesn't believe in banks, you know."

"Pet has been drawing a pension for three or four years," remarked Lon, "and so he must have——"

"He has drawn a pension from the day his leg was shot off," asserted Russell, who seemed to know what he was talking about. "Of course that gave him a good deal of back pay, so he must have had between ten and eleven thousand dollars to hand in to your father."

"W-h-e-w!" whistled Lon, looking at his companion in astonishment. "I didn't suppose father had that much money in his possession. Well, when Pet Wheelock wants his money he can have it; it couldn't be in safer hands. What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing," answered Russell; "only, I was just thinking. Has Pet got anything in writing to show where his money is?"

"I don't know; he wouldn't take any writ-

ings from father, any way. But what made you ask?"

"I was wondering whether, if Pet wanted his money to-morrow, he would get it. Did anybody ever see him pay Mr. Barry that money?"

"I don't suppose they did; otherwise, I should have heard of it."

"Well, Pet suspects something. From what I have heard, I don't believe he has handed over more than twenty-five dollars every month; now, what has he done with the balance?"

Lon confessed that he did not know.

"He keeps it stowed around him somewhere, and some day he'll wake up and find it gone. I ain't saying that your father wouldn't give him the money when he asks for it, writings or no writings; but if he shouldn't, where would Pet be?"

"I guess you had better not say anything about that," remarked Lon, indignantly; "if you do, I'll say something about your poaching."

"You will?" exclaimed Russell, taking his

foot down from the fence and straightening himself up to his full height; "I dare you to do anything like that! You forget the number of times that you and Elmer have been out with me of nights. Let's see you do it!"

"I didn't mean to say that you would call father dishonest, but I don't like the idea of your hinting that he would take advantage of that low, ignorant sailor," said Lon, who plainly saw that he could not threaten the poacher in this way. "My father is a pretty high man in this county, and you want to be careful how you speak about him."

"So do you; you don't want to say anything about my poaching,—I can tell you that. I can talk about your father as I please, and you nor nobody else can help yourself. I said he was not hard pressed when he sold me that mortgage, and I say so yet. I offered him more than it was worth, and that was why he took it. I told him it could go on the same as it did before, but he knew that I had another motive in view. I think now that I made a dunce of myself."

"I don't know whether you did or not,"

declared Lon, eager to turn the conversation into another channel; "you can easily sell that house for more than you paid for it. That place is worth two thousand dollars."

"Well, I have a whip to hold over you, and you want to be careful that you don't say anything to anybody else about where I pass my nights after the sun goes down," growled the man, as he turned and walked toward the house. "If you do, I'll let the whip fall, and I'll bet it'll hurt somebody."

The boys saw that what Lon had said in regard to his poaching made Russell very angry, for he walked straight into the house and closed the door. The boys waited until he went in, and then got on their wheels and started for home. They did not say anything for a long time; but at last Elmer spoke, and it was plain that he was angry, too.

"I tell you, Lon, you talked a little too plainly," said he. "You have waded the brook time and again to take out the trout that became fastened in the net, and if that don't make a poacher of you I should like to know what does."

"I didn't think," replied Lon, whose face grew white when he reflected on the trouble that Russell was likely to get him into. "I didn't suppose he would talk that way about my father. Why, we could buy and sell that man and not half try."

"That makes no difference. He has the dead wood on you, and if Russell happens to get into trouble through his poaching, your father will have to help him out."

"Not much, he won't!" exclaimed Lon, indignantly. "If Russell gets into a scrape he can get himself out; my father has nothing to do with his poaching."

"And where will you be?" inquired Elmer.

"Eh? Where will I be?"

"Yes; you are just as much of a poacher as Russell is."

"And where will you be?" asked Lon, for an idea suddenly occurred to him. "I know you did not wade the streams to get the fish, but when I threw them out you caught them and put them into the basket."

"I expect that if you go to jail I'll have to go also," said Elmer, who was as badly fright-

ened as Lon, although he did not show it so plainly. "I wish now I had kept out of reach of that poacher when I had the chance. He can do just what he pleases with us, and if we resent it he can put us in jail."

"But he will have to go there, too," asserted Lon, who found some consolation in that fact.

"Yes; but how much do you suppose he'd care for that? I'll bet you he's been locked up more than once for poaching."

"Don't let us go home yet," pleaded Lon, when they came to a crossroad. "I tell you, Elmer, you have put this thing in a bad way; I never thought Russell would turn on us."

"He hasn't done it yet, but his language just now convinced me he wouldn't hesitate long about it. You must be careful of what you say to him."

"The idea that I must hold my tongue while I'm in the presence of that fellow!" retorted Lon in disgust. "It seems as though everybody knew that we have been down to see that poacher,—don't it?" he added, as he and Elmer touched their caps to a man who

drove by them in a lumber wagon. "If that man had asked me, 'How many trout did you catch last night?' I believe I should have gone wild."

Lon turned into the crossroad, and Elmer, seeing he did not want to be left alone, followed after him. What Russell had said about poaching bothered them a good deal, and somehow or other they could not get the looks of guilt out of their faces. What would some of the country people have thought if they had known that the two spruce young gentlemen, whom they regarded as the sons of respectable men of the county, were as deep in the mire as were some of the poachers who had threatened to make trouble for them if they did not keep a civil tongue in their heads?

At last, along about the middle of the afternoon, the boys began to get tired and hungry, and turned their faces toward home. When on the shore road, the one on which they lived, and going at a rapid pace, they still had time to see Frank and Bob Ingram come out of the woods, one pushing a handcart and

the other pulling it, and noticed that there was a barrel, heavily loaded with something, on the vehicle.

"There are two boys who are happier than we are," remarked Elmer in a tone of voice which had a big tinge of envy in it. "Frank has been out since morning, but he has a pretty poor catch."

Then he called out,

"Halloo! Frank—is that all you have?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply; "the bluefish won't bite to-day."

Elmer would have been very glad if he could have changed places with either of the two boys; there was no poacher holding a whip over *them*.

CHAPTER V.

A TALK ABOUT THE PRIZE.

LON and Elmer dismounted from their wheels to wait until the young fishermen came up, and then Lon attempted to raise the tarpaulin which covered the barrel; he wanted to see how large a catch Frank had made that morning.

"Hands off, please," said Frank, who was pushing the handcart, and as he spoke he placed both arms on the tarpaulin.

"Why, what's the matter with your fish?" asked Lon in surprise. "You don't generally keep them covered up in this way."

"No; but the sun is pretty hot, and I am afraid it will spoil them for market," answered Frank, seating himself on the cart but keeping one arm extended over the barrel. "Besides, you have seen fish enough."

"Well, keep your old fish!" retorted Elmer with a sneer; "I'm sure we don't want to

knock off a cent of their value. Get on your wheel, Lon, and we'll go on."

"I hope you'll get enough for 'em to let you pay off that mortgage when Russell brings it to you and asks for the cash," cried Lon.

"Thank you!" said Frank with a smile; "I expect to pay that mortgage and have something left. Russell can come, now, as soon as he has a mind to."

But Bob's face grew angry, his eyes flashed, and he, too, was about to make a vigorous reply, when Frank looked at him and he closed his lips.

The two boys moved away on their wheels, and Bob and Frank drew the handcart into the yard. Lon looked back at them after he had gone a little way and saw that the brothers were engaged in an argument about something. It finally ceased, and both the young fishermen broke out into a loud laugh.

"What do you suppose those fellows have in that barrel?" asked Lon. "Not bluefish, I know, or they would not have taken so much trouble to keep it covered up."

"I wish to goodness I knew," replied Elmer,

looking down at the ground. "And the thing, whatever it is, must be of some value, too. He is going to pay the mortgage and have something left over."

"What in the world could it have been?" repeated Lon, who thought over everything a person could pick up at sea without settling upon anything. "It couldn't have been a bag of gold, could it?"

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed Elmer; "how could a bag of gold be floating on top of the water? He went out on the bar after fish, and there's nothing out there that he could get."

"Well, he found something, and it was floating on top of the water," rejoined Lon, as if that much was settled in his mind. "Perhaps we had better give it up for the present, but we'll find out what it is."

While the two boys were talking in this way they caught sight of Perkins, Russell's partner, who had been with him the night before when he was about to climb the fence that enclosed Mr. Adams's grounds. He was coming through the bushes as if he had been

down to the beach, but he was coming along as though he was in a hurry. The boys got off their wheels and waited for him to come up.

"Did you see Frank Ingram down there?" asked Lon.

"Yes."

"Well, what sort of luck did he have?"

"Did you see it?" inquired Perkins.

"No; he kept it covered up as tight as you please, and when I went to lift the tarpaulin he told me to let it alone."

"I could have told you that much; he wouldn't let anybody see it. Say! don't it beat the world, the sort of luck some people have? I have been fishing on this coast ever since I was knee-high to a duck, and I never found a thing like that yet."

"What did he have?" asked both the boys in concert.

"I only wish I knew where he is going to keep it to-night," answered Perkins, taking off his hat and scratching his head, as if to quicken his ideas. "He'll only have it for a night or two, but that will be plenty long enough for us."

"But what has he?" again queried Lon, who was impatient to hear what Frank had found that was so very valuable.

"It is ambergris, if you know what that is," replied Perkins; and when he told what the substance was he reached down, picked up a stone, and spitefully threw it into the bushes. "It is something that comes to a fisherman once in a lifetime, and now Frank Ingram has gone and got it."

"You don't seem to like it very well," remarked Elmer.

"Like it? You bet I don't!" exclaimed Perkins, turning savagely upon the boy. "Pet Wheelock is at the bottom of it."

"I never heard of such a thing before!" asserted Lon, looking at his companion. "What is it?"

"Well, I know there is such a thing, but what it looks like or where it comes from is something I can't find out. I once knew of a fisherman here who found half a barrel of it, and he took it to New York and sold it. No one knows how much he got for it, but I know that that fisherman is now a captain.

He runs a little schooner between Baltimore and the West Indies."

"But what is it used for?" persisted Elmer, who was more surprised than ever. "Who did he sell it to?"

"He sold it to some fellow who makes it into some kind of stuff which, if a man puts it on his handkerchief, will smell so loud that one would think there was a drug store near," replied Perkins.

"Perfumery?" asked Lon.

"I believe that is what they call it, and that is all I know about that ambergris. Frank has nearly a barrellful of that stuff, and it will be worth as much as fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars to him."

"Whew!" whistled Lon, while Elmer looked too astonished and angry to say anything. "Now, why couldn't I run across something like that?"

"You wouldn't have touched it if you had found it floating in the sea," said Perkins. "I don't believe Frank would have touched it if it hadn't been for Pet Wheelock. Pet told him what it was, and Frank brought it in."

"How did you happen to see it?" inquired Lon. "You must have had your eyes on it before Frank knew it."

"Not that, exactly; but I saw him while he was fishing it out. Frank is just as sly about it as the captain was, who never said a word about it until he had sent it off to New York and sold it."

"Did he think some of you fellows around here would want to steal it?"

"That was just what he was afraid of. The captain kept it in his room right where he slept; but only for one night, mind you. The next night it was miles from here."

"Well, this beats me!" exclaimed Elmer, who was so disappointed that he could not stand still. "That fellow was disheartened over the mortgage business a little while ago, and now to think he has found such an easy way out of it! Where are you going, Perkins?"

"I'm going home to get a coat, and then I'm going over to see Russell."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Lon, who just then got it into his mind that Frank Ingram would

have some trouble in keeping his catch after all—"I know what you're going to do; you have an eye on that ambergris, or whatever you call it, and are laying your plans to steal it!"

"There's where you are very much mistaken! Frank will keep it locked up so that nobody can get near it. I'm going to tell Russell about it, and if he wants to get his money for that mortgage mighty easy he will offer to take it and give up the papers."

"Don't you suppose that Pet Wheelock told him the value of it?" asked Elmer. "If he did, you can just lay that plan by."

"He didn't lisp a word of how much the thing would bring—not while I was around," replied Perkins, "and I stayed with him until Frank was almost ready to come ashore."

"Well, suppose Frank will not look at your offer—ther what? Frank is nobody's fool."

"Then Russell will offer him more—that's all."

"Aw! go on, now," said Lon, laughing in spite of himself. "Russell hasn't the money to buy the stuff. But I'll tell you what I'll

do: Frank has some nice books; they are not such as suit me, being natural histories and the like, but I'll go up to-morrow and borrow one. Then perhaps I can find out——”

“To-morrow!” ejaculated Perkins. “You ought to find out where the stuff is to be kept to-night, for to-morrow it will be too late. I'll go up and see Russell, and if you can find out where the stuff is stowed, meet us here shortly after dark.”

Perkins had evidently had his talk out and kept on to his house, and the boys were left to themselves. It was no wonder they had something to think about, for this proposal to rob a boy who had been blessed with such good luck was a new thing to them, and they did not know whether they had better take part in it or not. Suppose they should be discovered—then what would happen to them? Elmer was for dropping the thing right there, while Lon was determined to make Frank all the trouble he could before he would let him sell the ambergris that the sea had thrown into his grasp.

“I wish to goodness Pet Wheelock had had

business somewhere else, instead of going out on that bar," remarked Lon, as he got on his wheel and started homeward. "Why didn't he stay at home and work in his garden? He doesn't want any fish, anyhow; he has too much money already."

"If Frank had gone out there alone he wouldn't have pulled it in," answered Elmer.

"That's it, for he didn't know what it was; and if it had floated close in to the shore, Russell or Perkins might have got it. I say, Elmer, if Frank doesn't take care of that stuff mighty close he'll lose it before morning."

"That's what I think. I would like to see them steal it, and then see Frank's face when he first finds it out. But I guess we had better go home and go to bed; then nobody can say that we were there. Are you going over to borrow that book from Frank to-night?"

"Oh, yes, I'll do that; and I'll find out where the stuff is, if I possibly can. I'll be out at the gate in half an hour."

"Will you take your wheel with you?"

"I think we had better go on foot. You

can stay outside, if you want to, and I'll go in."

Lon was as happy as a boy could be when he rode up to the back steps at home and went into the house. The family were at supper, and when Lon sat down to it his mother asked him where he had been.

"I have been out in the country a little ways, and on the way I stopped for awhile to have a short talk with that old poacher, Russell."

"I really wish you would not have so much to say to that fellow," said his father in disgust; "he's going to get himself into a snarl very shortly."

"That's what I think. He tried to get into Mr. Adams's grounds this morning, but Bob Ingram was there and drove him back."

"Didn't Bob learn something about the mortgage Russell holds against his mother?" inquired Mr. Barry.

"Yes, sir; but what did Bob care for that? He said he would report him or anybody else who came over that fence; and he was in just the right humor to do it, too."

"Bob is very foolish; he might as well make something by staying away from that fence as not. He will think so, too, about the time he sees his mother sold out."

"But I don't believe he is going to see her sold out," replied Lon. "Frank was out fishing to-day, and he found something that is going to set him all right; he had it covered up in a barrel and wouldn't let me see it. It is ambergris, if you know what that means."

"It is something that is found floating at sea," said his father; that is all I know about it. Does Frank think he is going to make a penny out of it?"

"Make a penny? Well, I should say so. The stuff he found pretty nearly fills a barrel, and it will bring him in fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars. I call that making several pennies—don't you?"

Mr. Barry laid down his knife and fork, settled back in his chair, and looked at Lon. He had never been more surprised in his life.

"I tell you he's in luck, father, and your mortgage won't bother him one particle."

"I wish this thing had happened about two weeks ago," answered Mr. Barry, looking down at his plate.

"And I learned another thing while I was gone. How much money have you that belongs to Pet Wheelock?"

"How much money?" repeated his father, somewhat taken aback by this question.

"Yes; you have some money that belongs to him. Where's all that pension-money he received for the loss of his leg?"

"I'm sure I don't know anything about it. He was afraid to trust the banks, so he deposited some money with me. How much does he say he has handed over to me?"

"I didn't see Pet, and so he said nothing to me about it; but Russell says you must have between eleven and twelve thousand dollars that belongs to him."

"Did Russell say I had given Pet any writings to that effect?"

"I didn't hear him say anything about that, either; of course Pet would not think of demanding any writings of you."

"Well," retorted Mr. Barry, who had re-

covered his wits somewhat, "the next time you hear anybody say anything on this subject you can tell him that I have one thousand dollars belonging to Pet, and he can have it any time he wants it."

"Russell says it's more than that," replied Lon, who did not like the way his father gazed so steadily at his plate instead of squarely meeting his own eyes, which were bent fixedly upon him. "Pet has grown suspicious, and is keeping some of it back; he doesn't give you more than half he receives every quarter."

"He is keeping some of it out to repair his boat," answered Mr. Barry, who was evidently very much surprised to hear this.

"His boat has not had a thing done to it since I knew it," asserted Lon; "he is keeping some of his money hidden about him."

"Well, I must speak to Pet about that," was the reply; "some one will find out about it, and when he is off fishing it will be easy for a person to go there and ransack his cabin. If he wants me to act as his banker he must give me all of it. During your ride, did you see anybody you knew?"

This was a gentle hint that his father did not want to talk any more on that subject, so Lon answered only in monosyllables, and having finished his supper he pushed back his chair.

“I don’t like the way the old man acts about that money,” thought Lon; “he don’t take into consideration the back pay that Pet received. He must have more than a thousand dollars—I am sure of it.”

CHAPTER VI.

TWO CALLERS.

LON put on his cap, went out and brought in his wheel where he knew it would be safe, and with the remark that he believed he would go over and see how Elmer Payne felt after his long ride, he left the house. Somehow or other he got it into his head that his father deceived him when he spoke about the money he owed Pet Wheelock. He could not get that back pay out of his mind.

"I just know he has more than that," thought Lon, as he walked toward the gate. "He didn't seem a bit surprised when I told him he must have between eleven and twelve thousand dollars that he would have to give up some day, when Pet called for it. Now, what has he done with the balance?"

While Lon was meditating in this way he reached the gate, where he found Elmer waiting for him with his arms buried deep in his

pockets. He knew he must not make known the suspicions he had against his father, but it was considerable trouble for him to speak so that his companion would not know there was something in the wind. There was one thing about it: if his father was given to speculating on the ignorance of that sailor, what was the reason the son could not go on with his poaching against Mr. Adams? Lon thought he would take up that subject again when he could devote more time to thinking about it.

“Halloo!” cried Lon; “you are a little ahead of me this time.”

“Yes, I’m here,” answered Elmer. “Remember, though—I’m to remain outside while you go in and see Frank. Do you know, it seems to me to be rough to go back on a boy who has been blessed with such luck as Frank has. If it ever comes out on us——”

“Oh, now, how is it going to get out on us?” demanded Lon. “You don’t suppose I’m going to have any hand in stealing that stuff?—that is, if it is stolen.”

“No; but you will tell where it is, if

Frank is foolish enough to tell you, and they can do something with you for that. I wouldn't have my name mixed up in it for a good deal."

"Your name will not be mixed up in it at all, or mine, either. If I can find out where it is I'll tell Russell, and if he wants it he can go and get it. I don't believe it is worth any such sum as Perkins told us. Why, if that was the case I would be a fisherman myself."

At the end of half an hour the boys arrived at Frank's domicile, and Lon at once mounted the steps that led to the porch, while Elmer concealed himself among some trees on the opposite side of the road. In response to Lon's knock the door was immediately opened, and Frank's form appeared. He was surprised to see Lon there, but greeted him as cordially as though they had always been the best of friends.

"I'll come in, though I can stop for but a short time," said Lon, as he stepped inside the door in answer to Frank's invitation. "Good-evening, Mrs. Ingram ; I trust I see you en-

joying the best of health. The fact of it is, Frank, I came over to borrow a book of you ; the evenings are long, and I want something to read."

"Certainly ; here are the books," replied Frank, walking to a row of shelves that stood in one corner—home-made shelves they were, too—and drawing aside the curtain ; "take your pick."

Lon looked the books all over, stopping now and then to converse with Mrs. Ingram, and finally picked out one which he thought would suit him. It was strange that *that* book would interest him—"Facts About Men We Know;" and we may add that when he went home he put the book away and never thought of it afterward.

"I guess I'll take this," said he, holding the book up for Frank's inspection. "Now, Frank, there's another thing I wanted to speak to you about ; do you mind telling me what was in the barrel you took away from the beach to-day?"

"Oh, no," said Frank with a smile ; "but I knew that Perkins was down in the woods

somewhere, and I was afraid he might be tempted to give it another good looking-over. It was ambergris."

"What is it used for?" asked Lon.

"For perfumery. A manufacturing chemist will put it through some kind of a process, and thereby obtain an essential oil which is used in the making of various preparations."

"What kind of oil is that?"

"It's so volatile it will evaporate if you leave it exposed to the air. After you get it you must keep the bottle corked, or the first thing you know you won't have any scent; it will all go off in the air."

"I would like to see the ambergris, if you have no objections."

"I should be glad to show it to you, but it's in the cellar and the barrel is headed up. I had to put some straw in it in order to hold it steady."

"What does it look like?" inquired Lon. "Mrs. Ingram, I am bound to ask all I can about this stuff, so that if I ever see any when I am out sailing I'll know what it is."

Mrs. Ingram smiled and made a remark to

the effect that her husband had been a fisherman for many years but had never found anything of the kind, and Frank proceeded to give his visitor some idea of what the mass looked like when he first discovered it. It resembled wax of a slightly ash-gray color, he said, and he was not going to pick it up at all; but at that moment Pet Wheelock came along and told him what it was. Then of course he was anxious to secure it. There was a mortgage on his mother's place which the holder of wanted paid in two weeks, and now he could come and welcome.

"But you have not sold it yet," Lon reminded him.

"No, but it will be sold by the time I get back from New York to-morrow."

"Well, I have detained you long enough and I'll be going. I don't see Bob anywhere."

"He has gone to keep watch over Mr. Adams's grounds; there were some poachers around this morning, and he was afraid they might come back to-night."

"Well, Frank, I wish you the best luck in

the world," said Lon, extending a very limp hand to the boy; "I hope you'll get money enough to settle up that mortgage. The reason father sold it was because he was hard pressed for money."

"He might have sold it to somebody besides Russell," answered Frank, who did not want to talk on the subject, "or have said something to mother before disposing of it."

"I don't know what his object was, I am sure," replied Lon, picking up his hat; "the first thing I knew, the mortgage was gone. I'll bid you good-evening now."

"The stuff is in the cellar, and if Russell wants to go after it, why, it's his own lookout," muttered Lon as he closed the door behind him. "That boy is not wasting any time—he has it all ready to ship, and he thinks he feels the money in his pocket."

When Lon reached the gate he could not see anything of Elmer until he heard a voice calling to him in a subdued tone from the opposite side of the road. He looked across, and saw three persons standing in the shadow of the trees. When he went to them, he

found that the other two were Russell and Perkins.

"That little snipe is in luck," remarked Russell in a tone of intense disgust. "Did you see it?"

"No; but he has it locked up in the cellar, all ready to be shipped when he comes back from New York. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to tell him that I'll give him the mortgage for the ambergris," said Russell. "Do you think he'll take it?"

"Not much, he won't!" asserted Lon with a laugh. "He'll want to see you when he comes back from New York, and the only reason he'll want to see you then will be to pay what he owes you. You'll have to give a good deal more than the face of that mortgage if you want to get that ambergris in your possession."

"Well, you boys run along home, now, and I'll go in and see Frank. I guess I can work on his feelings, and make him do what I want him to do."

As Russell said this, he took Lon by the

arm and waved his other hand along the road on which he wanted him to go. Elmer fell in alongside of him, and when they were out of sight of the men Lon stopped and looked back. Russell and Perkins were not in sight; they had slipped into the woods, to wait until the boys were out of hearing.

"Elmer," whispered Lon, who became excited at once, "they're going to make an attempt to steal that stuff this very night!"

"That's what I think, and we'll be at home and in bed while they are doing it," said Elmer; "then nobody can say we saw them do it."

"Well, hold up a bit," urged Lon, catching hold of Elmer's arm and pulling him back; "we can hide in the bushes and watch them."

"You may, but I won't," replied Elmer, twisting his arm out of Lon's grasp; "I'm going as straight home as I can go."

"If you go, I'm going too," asserted Lon, who nevertheless wanted to see what the men were going to do; "but I wish you had a little more pluck. Who knows but that Frank may discover them?"

This was a strong reason why Elmer was so anxious to get away from them. If Frank discovered the men, he would very naturally come to the conclusion that Lon's and Russell's visits were in some way connected, and he would not rest easy until he had sifted the matter to the bottom. So Elmer increased his pace, as if to show that he was "going as straight home as he could go," and Lon, after hesitating a moment, followed close after him.

"I guess those young snipes have gone now," muttered Russell, after listening until the sound of their footsteps had died away, "and it's time for me to be doing something. I tell you I hate to go in there after the blessing I gave his brother last night."

"Couldn't you say that you did it in a friendly way, just to see if he was open to a bribe?" suggested Perkins. "I'll guarantee you'll think of enough to say when you get in there."

Russell waited to hear no more, but came out of the bushes, walked across the road, and entered Mrs. Ingram's gate. He went up the steps to the back door, and when Frank ap-

peared in response to his knock he was all smiles, and took off his hat before entering their kitchen. Mrs. Ingram sat with her sewing in her lap, and she nodded gravely, not knowing but that he had come there to see about the mortgage. Indeed, almost the first words Russell uttered, after accepting the chair Frank placed for him, had reference to the paper, and to nothing else.

"I came over to see what Bob thought of the offer I made him while he was on Mr. Adams's grounds last night," remarked Russell, depositing his hat on the floor. "I just as much as gave him to understand that if he would go away and let me alone I wouldn't say anything about the mortgage which Mr. Barry sold me; but it was all done in a friendly way; I had no idea he would take it in dead earnest, and so I thought I had better come over and make it straight with him."

"Oh, that was all right," said Frank, who did not know whether to believe this story or not; "Bob is above taking a bribe for anything."

"Yes, I found it so," replied Russell with

a laugh. "He said he would report me if I went over the fence, so I stayed on my own side. I told him, also, that I would be here in two weeks to see about that money; but that was not in earnest, either. The mortgage can run along for ten years, if you want it to."

"I assure you we are very glad to hear it," answered Mrs. Ingram, dropping her sewing into her lap and appearing to be immensely relieved. "This morning we did not know where the money was coming from."

"Then I am glad I came over. You can keep on paying me the interest just as you did Mr. Barry, and that is all I ask. By the way, I understand that Frank has found a fortune in the sea."

Up to this time Frank had been at a loss to account for Russell's visit. He had never before been in that house, and now Frank thought he had got at the truth of the matter. The man was there because he hoped to get a chance at the barrel and what there was in it, and not for the reason that he wanted to ease their minds in regard to the bribe he had offered Bob. Frank was on his guard, and had

been ever since the man arrived there, but he was doubly on his guard now. He waited to hear what else Russell had to propose. The poacher looked at the mother and then at the son, but he got no word from either of them that would induce him to go on. He found that he must be more explicit.

"How did you happen to find that stuff, Frank?" he asked, after a little hesitation.

"Why, I saw it floating on the water, and I sailed up and took a look at it," replied Frank.

"And did you pick it up?"

"No, for I didn't know what it was. But Pet Wheelock came along just about that time and told me, and then I lifted it into my boat in a hurry."

"Did he tell you what it was worth?"

"No; Perkins was the one who first told me. He said any chemist would give five hundred dollars for it, and Pet laughed at him. I have been reading up on it since I came home, and find it is worth a good deal more than that."

If Frank had been reading up on the mat-

ter it was not going to be so easy to cheat him, after all. The boy motioned toward the table as he said this, and Russell, looking that way, saw a large volume entitled "Natural History" which Frank had been looking over to find out something about his catch. If Frank had such an authority as that behind him, Russell might as well pick up his hat and go home; but the man had come there with an object in view, and he was going to try what virtue there was in it before he left.

"Then I don't suppose it would be of any use for me to offer you the mortgage for your catch," said he.

"No!" exclaimed Frank with a smile; "no use whatever."

"Somebody has been fooling you," continued Russell; "you won't get any such money as that for it. Time was when ambergris sold high, but those times have passed. You bring me the ambergris and I'll give you the mortgage on the spot," he continued, taking an official-looking envelope out of his pocket. "I have an opportunity to lend this money at a bigger rate of interest than you

are paying me, and I should like to have it; but your mortgage comes first."

"Well," said Frank, who began to get angry when he saw what Russell was driving at, "it won't hurt that person to wait two days before he gets his money. I'll tell you what I'll do; when I come back from New York I'll see you."

"Yes; but I may not be prepared to offer you that amount," ventured the poacher with a shake of the head. "You had better take my offer while I'm in the humor."

"No, I guess I won't; I'll go to New York first."

"Well," concluded Russell, rising to go, "I have done what I could for you. I may have occasion to use that money right now, and if I do I shall come around to-morrow and see about it. This is a mighty nice house to be turned out of."

"You're right, there," said Frank, the corners of his mouth settling down and a change of color coming into his face; "and what is more, we are not going to be turned out of it, either. I wish you good-evening, sir."

Russell lost no time in putting on his hat and getting out of doors, for Frank was getting angry again—he could see that plainly enough.

“Frank, you had no business to answer the man in that way,” said his mother, when the sound of Russell’s footsteps had died away. “He did not mean anything by what he said.”

“Mother, Russell’s visit and Lon’s are connected in some way,” answered Frank, who, having put his book away, now walked up and down the floor. “He didn’t ask where the stuff was, did he?”

No, Mrs. Ingram could not remember that he did. He probably thought that Frank had taken care of it.

“He means to steal it—that’s what he intends to do,” said Frank. “I wish he had said as much ; I’ll bet you——”

“Why, Frank, you would not strike him in here?” exclaimed his mother, who was amazed to see her son so fairly overcome with rage as he was at that moment.

“No, I wouldn’t, mother,” said the boy,

throwing his arms about her neck ; “ but I saw what he was getting at. That man means to steal the ambergris if he can, but it’s where he can’t get at it. Now I’m going to bed, and I shall sleep with one eye and both ears open. If he gets that barrel, he’s welcome to it.”

So saying, Frank lit a candle and went up stairs ; but when he arrived in his own room he set the candle down and struck his left hand with his right fist as hard as he could.

“ I wanted to tell mother how easily I could whip that fellow,” he ejaculated. “ I’ll bet I could do it, too.”

CHAPTER VII.

PET WHEELLOCK.

WE left Frank Ingram a little while back seated in the stern-sheets of his fishing-boat, holding a straight course for the bar at the entrance of the bay. It was one of his lucky days for fishing, and Frank would not have taken twenty dollars in advance for his catch when he came in, for he was a firm believer in the signs of the Zodiac. Many a time, when the "sign did not come right," he had stood on the beach and watched the fishermen as they came in, tired and wet, and with nothing to show for their day's work, while he had put in the day hoeing in the garden.

The angler is neither confident nor hopeful of success if the sign of the Zodiac is above the loins. In this case it was in the heart, and Frank was certain that by the time he came back his bait would be gone and he would

have as many fish as he could carry away. He got the sign from his father, and he had always gone by it. If you want to know what the signs of the Zodiac are, look in the front part of your almanac. But in this instance Frank did not take much interest in the fish, nor in anything else. He was thinking about Russell and the mortgage. He looked upon their home as gone, and he was wondering what he should do if his mother was sold out.

“Just as I was congratulating myself on how happy we are, and what I could do when that indebtedness was paid off, here comes that old poacher with papers to show that the house doesn’t belong to us at all,” mused Frank, pulling his hat down over his face and looking out toward the bar, over which the waves were beginning to break in little swells. “And Mr. Barry had to go and sell that mortgage to him without saying a word to us about it. Well, it all goes in a lifetime. Perhaps things will look better after I get back. I trust a good deal to Bob; he’ll find out the truth of the matter.”

It was five miles out to the bar, and during

the trip Frank was thinking of the poacher, and wondering that such men were allowed to exist for no other purpose than to spring mortgages and such papers on people who were innocent of any wrong. It seemed a queer world, if that was the way things were going. He wished now that Bob had kept out of sight and allowed that man to get over the fence; then he might have reported him to Mr. Adams, when he came back, who would certainly have had him imprisoned for awhile.

“Then look at the house he lives in and the wife he has,” thought Frank, who grew almost fighting mad whenever he thought of these things. “But then he has money, and that is what makes the world move, these days. He must be making a nice little haul from something he is doing or he wouldn’t have enough on hand to pay for that mortgage. Hallo! what’s that over there? I guess I’ll go and look at it; it looks like something that has been thrown overboard.”

The boat, in obedience to a move of her helm, went off on another tack and started

for the object in question, but as Frank drew closer to it he made up his mind that he did not want to touch it; it was something he had never seen before. He took his boat-hook and turned it over, and it looked for all the world like refuse that had been thrown overboard from some ship.

“Go your way, and let somebody else be fooled by you,” said he, shoving his boat away from the mass. “I have wasted half an hour on you, and during that time I could have caught some sheepshead.”

“Halloo! my hearty; I thought your fortune had come to you, sure.”

Frank looked around to see who it was that addressed him. The man who uttered the words was seated in a little fishing-boat like his own, and he had come up so silently that he was close to Frank before he knew it. This man was Perry Wheelock, better known to his acquaintances as “Pet,” a great favorite with everybody about the village if we except a few like Russell and Perkins, who did not like anybody who was down on poaching. The old fellow was “dead agin that,” and he

did not hesitate to say so in the plainest possible language. He was as neat as a new pin, dressed as he was in his naval suit of blue, his tarpaulin worn on the back of his head, and his shirt, as low as the first button, thrown open to the wind.

His boat was like him in every particular. She looked as though she had just come from the painter's hands, and not a rope was out of place. But Pet's face was what attracted the attention of most people. It was tanned and weather-beaten, but it bore the marks of honesty and good-nature; and the eyes with which he regarded Frank, as he brought his boat up into the wind, showed that he was glad to see him. As the boat came around he looked searchingly into the water; then he started as if he had been shot, let go his hold upon the tiller, and bent forward to examine the object more closely.

"Well, I swan to man!" were the first words he uttered; "you have it at last! Why don't you haul it in?"

It must be remembered that a good many years had passed since Pet lost his leg in an

attack upon Fort Sumter, and during this time he had spent all his life upon the shore; consequently he fell into the habit of those around him, and dropped his sailor expressions for words that came the nearest to testifying what his feelings were. The "I swan to man!" which he had used when he discovered the object in the water were equivalent to "Sink my tarry wig!" which he had employed on board ship when he wished to express the utmost astonishment.

"I swan to man!" he repeated. Then straightening up and looking at Frank, he asked, "Why don't you haul it in?"

"What! that?" exclaimed Frank, greatly surprised at the sailor's vehemence.

"Yes,—that! I mean that stuff right there," said Pet, bending over the boat and pointing to the object. "You don't want to do any fishing to-day. Take it and go home."

"Why, what is it?" asked Frank, more than half inclined to believe that what he was about to reject was worth something, after all. "Is it worth anything?"

"Worth anything! Well, I should say

so," answered Pet. "You take it home and put it where nobody can see it, and to-morrow morning you get up bright and early, go to New York, and ask some perfumery man what he'll give you for a barrellful of ambergris, and he'll tell you that he'll give you more money than you ever saw before.

"I never heard of such a thing before!" exclaimed Frank, wondering how he was going to get the stuff into his boat. "My father lived here——"

"Never mind what your father did," said Pet, suddenly raising his head when he heard a slight sound in the water. "Here's one of them fellows now; take your boat-hook and hitch onto it!"

Frank heard the sound, by this time, and saw Perkins approaching. He had come so close to him that he must have seen the stuff (Frank did not know what else to call it) as he plunged his boat-hook into it and drew it part way out of the water. Perkins was as much surprised as Pet at the sight of it; he opened his eyes and stood up in his boat, so that he could get a better view of it.

"Now somebody is in luck!" he declared, when his astonishment would allow him to speak at all. "Whose is it?"

Pet waved his hand toward Frank, who was busy hauling the ambergris into his boat.

"Yes, I have it now; but I was going to leave it, for I didn't know what it was," said Frank. "I don't know whether it is worth as much money as Pet thinks or not."

"I told him that some man in New York would give him more money for it than he ever saw before," declared Pet. "Now, ain't that so, Perkins?"

"I should say so!" exclaimed Perkins. "You are done fishing now, Frank; I'll give you five hundred dollars for it."

Pet laughed aloud. The idea of giving him five hundred dollars for that ambergris, which was worth three or four times that sum, provoked his mirth, and he roared so loudly that Frank was obliged to laugh, too.

"Well, that amount of money doesn't grow on every bush," asserted Perkins; "I'll give that much for it in less than half an hour after we touch the beach."

"Where are you going to get it?" asked Pet, opening his eyes in surprise. "One wouldn't think you were worth five hundred cents."

"I can raise it, and don't you worry about that," said Perkins, whose face showed that he was growing angry. "Is it a bargain, Frank?"

"No, I guess not; I'll go to New York and see what it's worth there."

"Well, I'll bet my boat against yours that you don't take it to New York," thought Perkins, as he brought his craft before the wind and sailed away from the spot. "I must see Russell about that, the first thing I do."

"That is one reason why I told you not to let anybody see it," said Pet, as soon as Perkins was out of hearing. "There are plenty of people here who will offer you half of what it is worth, and some who will lay their plans to steal it; but you can put it in your cellar and lock it up for to-night."

"And that is just what I'll do with it," assented Frank, who had been working hard

to get the mass into his boat. "Pet, I am ever so much obliged to you for telling me what sort of a catch I had struck. How much do you think it's worth?"

"A thousand dollars, clean cash," replied Pet, winking his left eye vigorously. "Mebbe it's worth more than that; I don't know. Now you are all right; fill away for home."

"Let's see," said Frank, as he took his place at the tiller again. "You were on hand when this catch was taken——"

"Yes; but I don't belong to this fleet," declared Pet hastily. "I know what you mean by that, but I shan't take a cent."

Frank had secured something that was well worth keeping, and of course he looked upon what he was going to get as so much prize-money. When vessels are cruising in company, and one of them takes a prize, the law says that she must divide the prize-money with all those ships, although they may not have done a thing toward helping her. Frank intimated that Pet was close at hand when he took his prize on board, and consequently was entitled to a share in the prize-money; but

Pet knew what was coming, and he was too sharp to be fooled that way. He wanted Frank to have all he could get for his catch.

"You always said there was a prize for you out here, and now that you have it, why don't you pay off that mortgage and save your mother's place?" continued Pet.

"What do you know about that?" asked Frank, much surprised; "has Russell been spreading that around, too?"

"I don't know who started it, but I know he has some papers that Mr. Barry once held. By the way, Frank, I have a little money, and if you can't think of any other way to get what you need, just call on me; I can help you out."

"I thank you ever so much," replied Frank, almost overcome with the sailor's generosity, "but I think I can raise it here."

"I haven't been foolish enough to give all my money to Mr. Barry," declared Pet with a knowing wink; "at first I deposited the whole of it with him, but something Russell said set me to thinking, and I have since kept some of it around the house."

"You had better not say that aloud," said Frank, "for there are too many Russells and Perkinses about here."

"I'll let them go into the house while I am gone and go all over it and see what they'll get," retorted Pet, with another knowing wink. "It's there, and I'll be willing to give it to anybody who finds it; I have it stowed away good and safe."

"How much have you?"

"Close to a thousand dollars. You see, Barry don't like that; he says that if I deposit my pension-money with him it must be all or none, for he won't be responsible for any loss; but I made him believe I wanted it for something else. Old man Barry stormed and kicked at a great rate, and the only thing that made him stop was the fear that I would ask him for it; and he doesn't want to lose that."

"How much of your money has he?"

"Ten thousand dollars in black and white," replied Pet earnestly. "I know I can't write very well, but I have an account of every cent he has. It will pass in law, too; the date and everything else is down."

"Well, if I were in your place I would tell him I want him to settle up with me as soon as possible," said Frank, who was amazed at the amount the sailor had mentioned.

"Now, that is just what your father said before he let the sea wash him out of that very boat you are in," answered Pet, a grave look overspreading his face, "and I'm sorry I didn't do it. You wouldn't mind asking Mr. Barry, would you?"

"No, I wouldn't mind going to him if you insist upon it; but I think the best plan would be for you to hire a lawyer. Suppose you try Fuller."

"Oh, he's too young," exclaimed Pet, in a tone of voice which meant that his words would admit of no argument. "You see, old Barry is kinder foxy, and he would tell all sorts of stories to make the young lawyer believe him."

"That's all the more reason why you want a lawyer. I know Fuller is young, so am I; but nobody need make me believe I can't catch fish on that account. He's poor, and is working hard to get ahead."

“Well, I’ll think about it, and tell you what I’ll do the next time I see you. But if you stay here all day talking you won’t get that ambergris home before dark. Good luck to you.”

To show that he was in earnest by what he said, Pet went back to his own tiller and filled away ; and Frank, bestowing one look on the object that was supposed to be worth so much money to him, and shaking his head as if he doubted the truth of the sailor’s statement, went back to his own stern-sheets.

“It must be worth some money or Perkins wouldn’t have said so,” he meditated. “It will bring more than five hundred dollars, too. Well, the longer I live, the more I find out. We’ll see what Bob thinks of this.”

It took him two hours to reach his anchorage, and there he found something to excite his suspicions. The boat that Perkins used was anchored a short distance from his, but Perkins himself was on the beach. He could not go ashore until he had a small boat to go in, and so he decided to sit down and wait until he could find some one to take him off ;

but before he had passed an hour in that way he saw his brother Bob come out on the beach. The hails that passed between them were evidently understood, and in a short time Bob was coming toward him. Frank could not wait until his brother boarded him to hear of his good luck, but began shouting to him the moment he came within hearing.

“Congratulate me, Bob! You didn’t think the sea had a fortune in store for me—did you? Well, I have it!”

CHAPTER VIII.

NATURAL HISTORY.

BOB INGRAM was better posted in the ways of the birds that float in the air, the beasts that roam in the woods, and the fish that swim in the brooks, than his brother was, and when he looked under that tarpaulin to see what Frank had caught, the latter saw the glance of surprise change to a radiant look, and knew that he had fished up something that was worth money to him.

“Frank,” said he, so excited that he could not stand still in his boat, “you have your fortune at last!”

“So I think,” replied Frank; “but what is it?”

“Why, it’s ambergris—that’s what it is.”

“I know that, and I meant to ask Pet about it while I was hauling it in; but I became so interested in what he was saying that I forgot all about it. Where does it come from?”

"It comes from the stomach of a whale," said Bob. "When he gets so sick that he can stand it no longer he ejects it—not on the land, as the whale of old did Jonah, but upon the sea, or wherever he happens to be; and there it floats until, fanned by the tides and breezes, it goes off hundreds, and perhaps thousands of miles, to cheer the heart of some fisherman or other toiler of the sea—like you, for instance."

"I say," said Frank, "you're getting poetical."

"It's only part of what I have read. But seriously, Frank, you have made something by this day's work. Where did you find it?"

Bob climbed into the fishing-boat and seated himself by his brother's side, while the latter gave him a brief description of the events of the morning. He went along all right until he came to Perkins, and then Bob's face assumed a very grave expression.

"That fellow is on the beach now," said he. "He told me you had taken something a little out of the usual line, and says he'll give you five hundred dollars for it, which is more than

you'll get for it in New York, and that if you're wise you'll take it."

"That's what he offered me, but I told him I would take Pet's advice; and it has since occurred to me that he has made up his mind to steal this prize if he can get his hands on it."

"I believe he has. A fellow who'll spend his nights in poaching will do almost anything else. We must put it where he can't get it. You stay here and I'll go ashore and get an empty barrel to carry it in. I'll bring the hand-cart along, so that we can get it up to the house without any trouble."

Bob got into his boat and started for the beach; and Frank afterward said that, with all his experience of Bob at the oars, he had never before seen him pull so hard. Perkins met him when he landed, but Bob did not stop to talk to him. He had something on hand which was of more importance, and he lost no time in getting out of sight in the bushes.

"What will mother say now?" thought Frank, moving the tarpaulin a little to one

side so that he could view the ambergris without getting up from the comfortable position into which he had thrown himself. "Just at the time when she needs money, here it comes. Somehow I didn't feel at all uneasy about Russell; I knew that something would turn up, although I didn't know where to look for it."

Frank lay in the stern-sheets for an hour waiting for Bob, and when at last he saw him coming he arose and proceeded to tie up the sail, for he did not expect to come out to his boat again that night. The barrel was in the boat, and all the boys had to do was to tumble the ambergris into it and pull for the shore. There was one thing that Frank did not neglect to do, and that was to throw the tarpaulin over the barrel, and so shut it out from the view of outside parties. There might be others on the beach who would want to take a peep at the catch, and he thought it best to keep it covered. When the ambergris was in New York and sold to some manufacturing chemist, then it would be time for everyone to know of his good fortune.

“Bob, when we land and reach the house, you find that article in the ‘Natural History’ and let me read it. I want to know a little about the origin of this stuff, so that I can talk about it.”

The boys did not find Perkins on the beach, but they found Lon and Elmer there, who tried hard to see the inside of the barrel; but Frank was on the lookout for them. After they went on, Bob took his brother to task for his obstinacy, and that was what created the dialogue which had attracted the attention of Lon and Elmer.

“I should think you might have let them see it,” said Bob. “What harm would it do?”

“I don’t know that it would do any harm; but then they might spread it abroad where we don’t want it to be known. I don’t like to suspect anybody of stealing, but a fellow who’ll poach on his neighbor’s property will, as you said yourself, do almost anything.”

Frank made some other remarks which went far toward making Bob see that he had done the best thing that could be done under the circumstances, and presently the boys

pulled the hand-cart up to the back steps, on which Mrs. Ingram stood to welcome them. She was so surprised and overjoyed that she could not say a word. It seemed strange to her that that oily, waxy-looking mass, which was speedily uncovered for her inspection, should be worth so much money; but what Pet Wheelock said must of necessity have some weight. Pet was an old sailor, had seen such articles before, and he certainly ought to know what he was talking about.

“Now, the next thing is to put it where it will be safe while I go to New York,” said Frank, when his mother stood looking at the object and asking questions about it. “We’ll put it in the cellar and lock it up there, and anyone who can get it without arousing me is welcome to it.”

In the course of half an hour the barrel, filled with straw and headed up, was put into the cellar, the windows closed and barred, and the door which gave entrance into the bulkhead was shut and fastened. Then Frank looked around and was satisfied. It seemed to him that nothing in the cellar

could be moved without disturbing him or his mother, who slept in the rooms overhead. Bob's next care was to find the article relating to ambergris in the "Natural History," which he gave to his brother to read. The article read as follows:

"'All is not gold that glitters,' and, conversely, an uninviting exterior sometimes hides a diamond in the rough; and certainly the substance known as ambergris is a most fitting representative of the latter class. Here are some facts about it given by the *New York Express*:

"'Ambergris, which is used as a basis for all standard perfumery, was first found as an unattractive mass floating on the surface of the sea or lodged upon the shore. How so unattractive a substance ever suggested itself as a perfume is not known to man, but it has been in use for centuries, and it was only in comparatively recent times that its origin became known.

"'It is nothing more than a morbid secretion of the stomach of the spermaceti whale. It is described as a fatty, waxy substance,

disagreeable to the touch, but even in its crude state exhaling a pleasant odor. The crude substance is subjected to a chemical action to extract the active principle, called amberine.

“‘It was recently reported that a Maine fisherman picked up a mass of the substance which nearly filled a barrel, and was worth twenty-five thousand dollars. This is probably an exaggeration, both as to size and price, for the largest piece on record, weighing one hundred and thirty pounds, was found near the Windward Islands. This was sold for twenty-five hundred dollars.’ ”

“Now, I’ll tell you what is a fact, Frank,” said Bob, when Frank finished reading the above extract, closed the book, and looked fixedly at his mother,—“you have something that will stop your fishing for all time. That ambergris fills the barrel two-thirds full.”

“If I get an offer of a thousand dollars for it, it can go,” answered Frank. “Just think! I have been a fisherman here for ever so long, and never knew a word about the stuff. Mother, what do you think of my fortune now?”

"I am very thankful," said Mrs. Ingram, and the words came from her heart; "it comes just at the time we need it the worst. Bob, you had better go to bed. If those poachers visit you to-night they will find you stretched out under a tree, sound asleep."

"Don't say a word to me about sleep," said Bob; "I'm so excited that I couldn't stay in bed after I got there. But I don't believe those poachers will come near me to-night."

"Where will they go?" asked Frank.

"They will come here to see you, if they think you are anxious to sell that catch——"

"They might as well give up all hope of that," rejoined Frank with a laugh; "they haven't the money to pay me for what the stuff is worth."

After this there was silence in the house, but anybody could see there was a good deal of excitement. The boys went to work to get dinner—a late dinner it was, too, for it was nearly five o'clock—and they sat down to it with appetites that would not come at their bidding. It was soon over, and then Frank busied himself in wiping the dishes for his

mother, while Bob went up stairs to get a wink of sleep. At any rate, he said that was all he wanted; but when seven o'clock came and he did not get up, Frank went up stairs to call him.

"Poachers! my boy," shouted Frank, shaking his brother roughly by the shoulder; "the poachers are on hand, and they have one stream half emptied!"

"Oh, I heard you when you were coming up stairs," said Bob.

"Yes, I know you did,—and you snoring at the rate of ten knots an hour! Get up, or Mr. Adams will be after you."

Bob was soon off to watch the streams for poachers, and Frank, not knowing what to do with himself, picked up a hoe and went into the garden. He stayed there until it got so dark that he could not see what he was doing, but while he hoed he kept up a thinking about his ambergris, and tried to determine what he would do when it was sold and the money was in his pocket.

"I must give up fishing," he thought. "Mother has been down on that ever since

father was drowned, and I must look around and try to find something else to do. I wish now that I had paid more attention to my books when I was at school—especially my bookkeeping—for then I would not be out of a job long. It will be a hard task for me, though. I have been allowed to go and come when I pleased, and got up in the morning knowing that I had the same business to attend to as on the day before. Well, I can't see to do any more, so I guess I'll go into the house."

Before putting this resolution into effect Frank ran down the stairs to the door which opened into the bulkhead and tried it, to make sure it was locked, and the key was hung up in his mother's kitchen. Then he visited all the cellar windows, but they refused to open for him; and then, satisfied that his day's catch was safe, he hung his hoe in the woodshed and went into the house.

"I guess I had better read over that article once more," said he, taking the volume of "Natural History" and laying it on the table. "When the chemist asks me something about

it I want to be ready with an answer. Do you know the address of any man who deals in such books?"

No, his mother did not. The best thing he could do would be to ask in some store for a business directory and look through it until he found the name and location of the firm he was in search of.

CHAPTER IX.

PET WHEELOCK'S MONEY.

IT will be remembered that in a previous chapter Lon Barry met Elmer Payne, Perkins and Russell, in the shadow of some trees near the home of Frank Ingram, where the two poachers were trying to hatch out a scheme to obtain possession of the ambergris, that Elmer determined to go "straight home," and that Lon reluctantly accompanied him. While on their way Lon remarked,

"Well, another thing has been running in my head ever since we have been here. That old sailor has some of his pension-money hid away about his house, and I don't believe he ought to have so much laying around loose."

"Have you been thinking about that ever since we left home?" asked Elmer. "I've been thinking about it, too. Somebody will slip up there some day when he's out fishing, and when he comes back he won't have that money."

“That’s just what father said. The fellow—I don’t know how much he gets for having lost a leg down there among the rebels, but he must get a tidy sum for it—handles more money than you and I ever saw, and yet he keeps on fishing all the while. Now, I say such things ain’t right. You don’t get more than a dollar a month, do you?”

“No, I don’t; and some months I hardly get that. Father is awful stingy, and every time I ask him for a dime he says, ‘What did you do with the last dime I gave you?’ I have to account for every cent he gives me.”

“I guess I know about how you are treated, for my father acts a good deal in the same way with me. Here are these two men just rolling in wealth, and yet they are afraid to give us twenty cents for fear we’ll go to Bay Shore or Hempstead and spend it for billiards. I have been provoked at father for his refusal to give me money, and said to myself that I would never ask him for another cent as long as I lived.”

“Here too,” said Elmer.

“Well, what do you say? Shall we go down

there to Pet's house, while he is out on the bay, and skirmish around to find what he has hidden there? I'll bet you we'll find enough to keep us in billiard-money as long as we want to play."

"I've been thinking of that ever since Russell told us about the old fellow keeping part of his pension-money," replied Elmer slowly. "No doubt you'll think it strange for me to want to go into this business, while I was so anxious to keep away from Russell to-night."

"No, I don't; I knew you had some good reason for it."

"You see, the way things are fixed now," continued Elmer, "there'll be no trouble at all in placing the theft of that ambergris, or whatever you call it, upon Russell, for he has been there to-night. We can do what we please at Pet's shanty, for we haven't been there for months."

"That's the idea!" said Lon; "all we have to do is to get into the house——"

"That will be easy," interrupted Elmer; "I have two or three keys, and I'm sure one of them will fit the padlock on his door."

“So far, so good,” answered Lon, who had about come to the conclusion that he would not touch the money after they found it. He thought Elmer was going to reject his proposition in regard to robbing Pet’s house, but now he was coming to the front, and acting for all the world as if he was the prime mover in the affair, and Lon believed it would be a good plan to keep him so. “And when we get in we can tumble things about as much as we please, but when we go out we must leave them just as they were,” he added.

This was the beginning of a long conversation; but the only thing that could be decided upon then was that they should visit the old sailor’s house on the following day. The boys did not know why it was, but Pet always went fishing when Frank did—he always caught plenty of fish, too—and when Frank stayed in, the old sailor always found work to do in his garden. Frank would go out for three or four days and then he would stop, and it was while he was absent that the young thieves determined to do their work. So busy were they in their talk that it was ten

o'clock before they knew it, and then they bid each other good-by and separated for their homes.

"Well, I thought you were going to stay out all night," said his father, when Lon burst into the room. "I guess you found Elmer, all right."

"Oh, yes; and he was coming over to see how I was getting on. It is bedtime, isn't it?"

"Of course it is, and has been for some time. Did you see anything of Russell while you were out?"

"No, I didn't," exclaimed Lon, as if he was very much surprised.

"I think," said Mr. Barry, folding his paper so that he could hold it more readily, "that Frank will find some difficulty in getting his day's catch to New York."

"What do you mean by that?" inquired Lon, and now he became surprised in earnest. "Do you think that Russell intends to steal it?"

"I do. If he does not steal it, it will not be because he does not try."

"But Frank has it locked up in his cellar," said Lon, speaking before he thought; "I mean, that is what he told me he was going to do with it."

"I don't care where he puts it, Russell will have it in his hands before to-morrow night. You'll see."

Lon went up to his room, but he did not do much sleeping when he got there; and when he forgot himself, and wandered away into the land of dreams, he thought he was in the old sailor's house and that he found the money—a much heavier load than he could lift—stowed away in a tin box under his bed. He was in the act of opening his knife to examine the contents of the box when he heard an uproar outside the house and in rushed Pet, eager to save his earnings. Lon did not wait to see what the sailor would do to him, for he awoke and found himself shivering all over with fright.

"It's nothing but a dream," thought Lon, looking all around to make sure that he was in his own room, "and Pet isn't here, with his wooden leg in his hand, ready to knock me

down. But wasn't that a heap of money, though! I tell you if we get that much we'll have to hide it. So Frank is bound to lose his day's catch," he continued thinking, turning his pillow over and settling himself into a comfortable position. "I hope he may; he'll put on a good deal of style if he gets a thousand dollars for that ambergris."

When morning came he answered the breakfast-bell looking as fresh and rosy as though he had enjoyed a long night's refreshing slumber. He ate very little and then went out for his wheel, and after wiping it off and oiling it he was ready for the business of the day. Elmer was not waiting for him at the gate, so he sat down and thought over what his father had said to him the night before, and he also bestowed considerable reflection on his dream. It was so vivid that Lon could not get it out of his mind, and he had half a mind to give it up; but just then Elmer came out on his wheel.

"Halloo!" called he, "I guess you slept well last night."

"No, I didn't; I couldn't get to sleep."

"Did you think old Pet was coming in on us? Well, he didn't bother me; I didn't know anything from the time I touched my pillow until I heard the breakfast-bell this morning. Now, what is to be done first? I have those keys in my pocket."

"Say," said Lon; "father says that Frank Ingram is going to have some trouble with his catch."

"How so?" asked Elmer.

"He says Russell will steal it."

"Good enough!" exclaimed Elmer, a smile overspreading his face; "that is just what I thought. I hope he'll hide it so deep in the ground that Frank will never find it again. Come on, now; what shall we do first?"

There was only one thing they could do, and that was to go down to Pet's house and make sure that he had gone out on the bay. They got on their wheels, and as they were going by Frank Ingram's domicile they looked through the open front door and saw Bob engaged in his usual occupation of setting the table for his mother. Frank was nowhere to be seen.

"He has gone to New York as sure as you are a foot high," said Lon.

"I'll bet you we'll have more money to-night than that fellow will have," asserted Elmer. "But do you believe that the stuff he has in his barrel is worth a thousand dollars?"

"No, I don't; if it was, Perkins would have offered him more. It must be fun to be a fisherman, when one can strike such luck as that. I asked father to give me a boat and set me afloat, but he wouldn't do it."

"A pretty fisherman you would make,—wouldn't you?" retorted Elmer, in disgust. "You would come in all wet and slime, and no decent person would speak to you."

"Yes, but see the money I would make. If I should run afoul of such a piece of ambergris——"

"You wouldn't do it. You might fish until your head was as white as Pet's, and you would never see a thing like that. Here's the house; let us go up to it as though we had a perfect right there, and then, if Pet is at home—what shall we tell him?"

"That we called to make some inquiries

about the ambergris that Frank caught yesterday," replied Lon. "Besides, we want to know how many fish he had to bless himself with."

The boys kept on, and in a few moments dismounted at the gate of Pet's shanty, which was not a shanty at all, but a neat little cottage, built of planed boards, with a porch on the shady side of it where the old sailor was accustomed to sit and smoke his evening pipe. His garden, too, was in as fine order as the house, and everything in it bore evidence of Pet's hard work in keeping the weeds down. Some sweet peas were trained over the door, so that when the sun came in there the owner could find a shade whenever he chose to look for it. The door was locked, there was nobody in sight, and a glance at the beach showed them that his skiff was tied to the buoy to which his sailboat was anchored when not in use, so that he could always come ashore when his day's fishing was done.

"And just think of it!" exclaimed Lon, with some anger in his tones—"this cabin is built on my father's grounds, and he has

never charged him a cent of rent for it. I wish to goodness it would get on fire some night and burn up."

"Well, it shows what a man with one leg can do if he once gets about it," said Elmer, dismounting from his wheel. "Now, if you'll take a turn about the shanty, and be sure that no one is in sight, I'll go in and try my keys on the door."

Lon had the easiest work to do, for there was no one in view either up or down the beach. It was plain that they had things all their own way, and when he returned to report this to Elmer he found the door open and his companion looking everywhere for the money.

"Look under the bed," said Lon; "there is where I dreamed I found it. But I declare, there isn't any bed!"

The bed was a hammock, and was swung up on two separate hooks when the sailor wanted to go to sleep, but when not in use it was hung on one hook, to be out of the way. There was nothing in that room large enough to cover a dollar bill, let alone the amount of

money Pet was supposed to have stowed away about there.

"Let's go into the kitchen and see what we can find there," urged Elmer, somewhat disappointed at the poor result of their search. "Ah, this is something like it!" he continued, as he went into the other room and found the cooking utensils in place, ready to be used when Pet came in from his fishing. "Look in the stove the first thing. I have read of misers who hid their money there, and who knows——"

"And when you kindle a fire in it, forgetting that the money is there, you are just that much out," interrupted Lon. "There's nothing in the stove; there was a fire in it this morning."

The boys were in a hurry about finishing their search, and every once in a while one of them went to the door to see if anyone was within hearing of their voices. They did not handle things as carefully as they would have done if they had been allowed plenty of time. They took Pet's loaf of bread and the remains of his breakfast out from under the table and

slammed them back against the wall; but their most persistent searching failed to bring the coveted money to light.

We say they took the remains of his breakfast, which the old sailor intended to eat when he returned from fishing, and slammed them back against the wall. This table was not made, as our tables are, with straight up-and-down legs, but the legs were crossed, and provided with a board near the bottom, so that the old sailor could place his feet upon it and hold the table in position while the vessel was rolling and pitching about in the trough of the sea. The cover, too, was provided with "checks" about three inches high. These were simply pieces of board nailed along its edges, and it was their duty to keep the dishes from rolling off on the floor. In short, Pet had things as near ship-like as possible.

"Where do you suppose he keeps that money?" inquired Lon, as he went to the door and looked out.

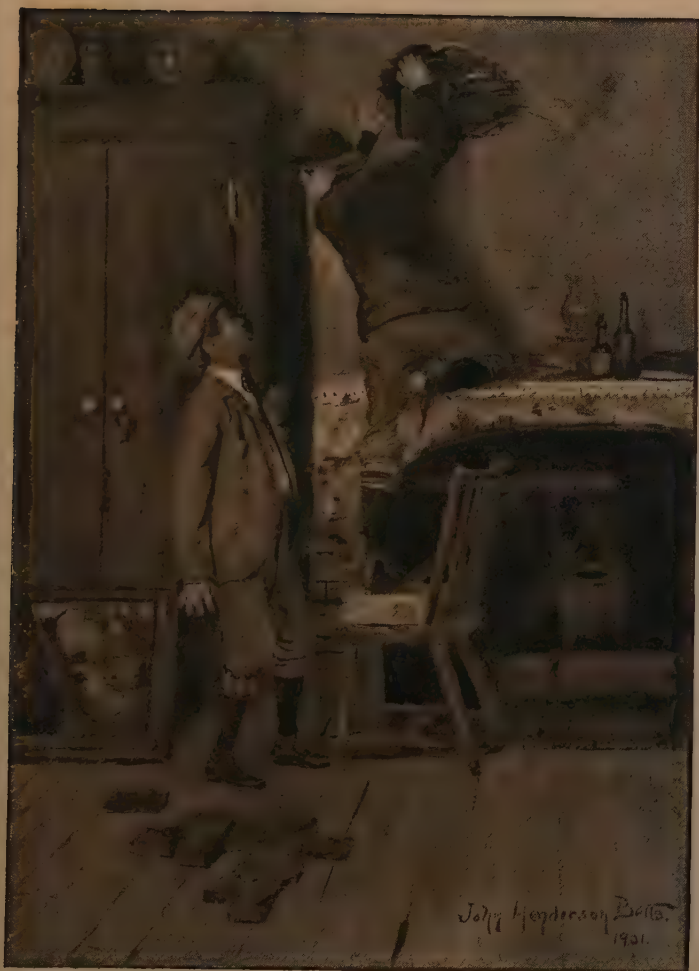
Elmer did not reply to the question, for he was in the other room, looking up at the walls. There was only one picture in that room, and

on this his eyes were fastened. It represented a naval battle at sea in which the frigate "Constitution" was giving particular fits to a British man-of-war that was trying to run away from her. It showed what Pet's feelings were, even if he could no longer go to sea.

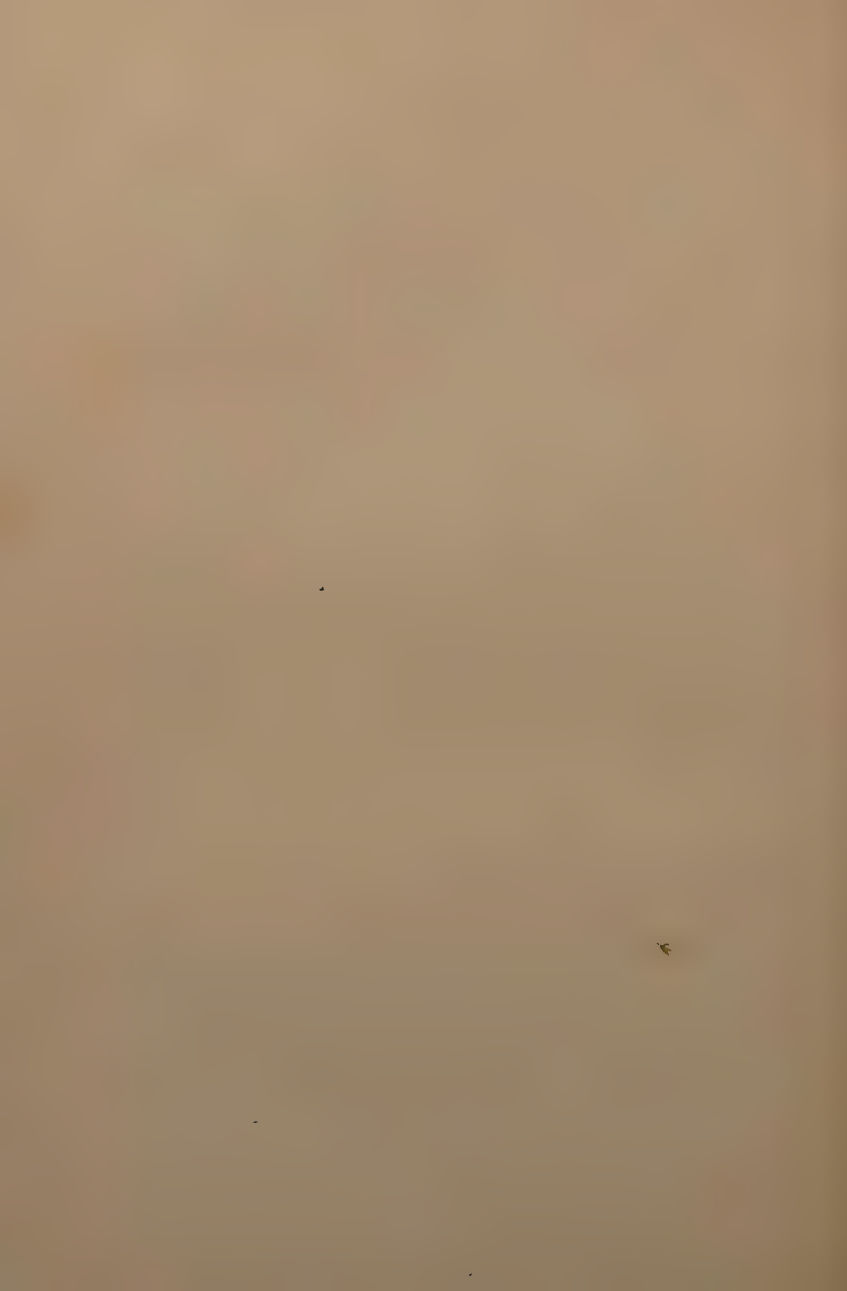
"I don't see anything wrong in that," said Lon; "we whipped the Britisher, and that's all there was of it."

"I don't see anything wrong in the way it hangs," replied Elmer, looking around for a chair, but the chimney from the fireplace goes up there, and perhaps some of the bricks have been taken out from behind it."

Lon became excited at once. A few moments before, he was disposed to give up the search and go home; but now that there was a chance of finding the money, he was ready to continue the search. He quickly passed the chair to Elmer, took the picture when it was handed down, stood it up against the wall, and uttered an ejaculation when he saw, sure enough, that an opening had been made in the chimney.



"Don," said Elmer, in a whisper, "I've found something."



"Lon," said Elmer in a whisper, so excited that he could scarcely hand down the bricks that he took out of the wall, "I have found something."

"Pass it down here, then," whispered Lon; "but first let me go and see if there's anybody in sight."

"It's a big box, and if it's full of money there must be lots of it!" exclaimed Elmer; and as he spoke he drew it out and tried the lid. "It's locked," he added, holding it up to his ear and shaking it. "There's something in there that rustles mightily like greenbacks."

By the time Elmer stepped down on the floor Lon had his knife ready, the blade was inserted beneath the lid, and with a strong wrench the box came open. The boys were almost tempted to shout at the sight of what was revealed to them; but they refrained from speaking—time was too precious for that—and Lon, taking the box under his arm, started for the door.

CHAPTER X.

PET DISCOVERS HIS LOSS.

“**H**OLD on, there, Lon!” cried Elmer, when he saw his companion in guilt making a bee-line for the door with the box under his arm. “Remember, you said we must put everything back just as we found it. Come back!”

“Let the things take care of themselves!” replied Lon, going to the door and carefully thrusting his head out; “we have the money, and that’s all we care for.”

“We want to keep Pet from suspecting that anyone has been here,” insisted Elmer. “Come back and hand up those bricks, so that I can put them just as they were.”

Lon went very reluctantly, and when he put the box down on the floor his hands trembled so violently that he came near dropping it. He passed the bricks up to Elmer, but the latter was so slow at putting them in place

that Lon began to lose all patience and urged him to hurry up before somebody came and caught them. The picture was passed up after awhile; but Elmer, who began to see that their success lay in getting away before some one arrived to surprise them at their work, so far forgot himself as to hang it crooked on the wall. As long as he put the picture back where it came from, however, he was satisfied.

“Hold on!—we are not done yet,” said he, when Lon picked up the box again; “we must put these eatables back. Come on, now—you needn’t hang back and expect me to do it all; you are as deep in the mud as I am in the mire.”

Lon once more set down the box, and they proceeded to put the remains of Pet’s breakfast back where they had found them; but the provisions were put back higgledy-piggledy—the loaf of bread in one place, the meat in another, and the coffee-pot somewhere else; and they failed to notice that the pot was put back in such a way that more than half its contents ran out and mingled with the eatables in the trough.

"There, now, I guess things are all right," exclaimed Lon, drawing a long breath of relief as he picked up the box once more; "if they're not, you can fix them up to suit yourself. Fasten up and come on."

By the time Elmer had locked the door he found that Lon and his wheel had disappeared in the bushes. The skiff rode at its moorings and there were but one or two sails on the bay, but they were so far off that their crews could not see what was going on on the beach. The fisherman would come home late at night, and he might eat his supper and go to bed without knowing anything of his loss. That was one thing Elmer depended upon. Pet might be in the habit of examining his box once a week—he certainly would not think of looking at it oftener than that—and by the time he discovered the robbery Elmer calculated that he and Lon would have the money hidden, be over their excitement, and able to talk to Pet or anybody else about it. It was a serious thing, as Elmer discovered when he looked at it, and he did not know what the consequences might be if they were found out.

"I say, Lon, where are you?" inquired Elmer, after he had looked all around for his companion; "you don't want to go away and leave me in this shape."

"Here I am," came a voice from a neighboring thicket; "I've been looking over the money, and there must be as much as five hundred dollars here."

"I'll bet you there is more than that," said Elmer. "How much have you in your pockets?"

"Not a cent," replied Lon, rising to his feet and turning both his pockets inside out to prove his words. "It's all in one-dollar bills."

This was another whimsical trait on the part of the old sailor. He knew that the big bills were liable to be counterfeited, but the small ones were not. Whenever he received his pension-money he retained the five-dollar bills, and as fast as he was called upon to pay any debts he gave one of them out and took small bills in change. These he put into his box, and never touched them afterward.

Elmer seated himself beside Lon and pro-

ceeded to look the bills over. There was nothing but one-dollar bills in the lot. He counted them up until he had five hundred in his hands, and there appeared to be as many more yet to be counted; then he bundled them all up and put them back in the box.

"By gracious! we have a thousand dollars if we have a cent!" said he in an excited whisper. "What shall we do?"

"I wish it was back where it came from and we were safe at home," replied Lon earnestly. "Do you know, I never felt so mean about anything I ever did in my life!"

"Mighty clear of us taking it back!" exclaimed Elmer, looking at Lon with an expression on his face in which surprise and alarm struggled for the mastery. "Why didn't we leave it there in the first place?"

"I'll take it back, if you will," suggested Lon.

Elmer was silent, for Lon seemed to be in deep thought. It was easy enough to steal a man's money when he was not there to defend it, but the idea of taking a thousand dol-

lars—for there must have been that much money in the box—when the owner was not there, and facing the examination that would surely come after it, was not so easy, for the old sailor would leave no stone unturned to get at the bottom of the matter. He would turn the village upside down but that he would discover who was responsible for the robbery.

“This is the worst thing we have been engaged in yet!” declared Lon, after thinking the matter over. “We need not think we’re going to get out of it, for there are too many sharp lawyers in town. And the first thing that will come out on us will be our poaching.”

“But Russell and Perkins are as deep in that as we are,” asserted Elmer. “If they don’t stand our friends we’ll tell on them.”

“But what good will that do? They’ll be shut up for a few days, but they won’t care for that,” replied Lon. “Father has a copy of the game laws, and in it I have been reading about trespassing on private grounds. The act says, ‘And whoever shall violate the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a mis-

demeanor, and shall, supplemental thereto, be subject to exemplary damages in an amount of not more than twenty-five dollars in addition to the actual damages sustained by the owner or lessee.' Now, how many twenty-five dollars do you suppose Russell will have to pay for all his poaching?"

"Not many, I guess," ventured Elmer.

"And when they get through with him they'll come down on us; and you know your father wouldn't be overly anxious to pay out any money for you."

"Why didn't you tell me of this when you proposed the robbery?" asked Elmer, looking alarmed in spite of himself. "Just see what a terrible fix you've got us into! Come on, now, and we'll put the money back."

Lon, who was much in favor of this, arose to his feet with alacrity, and without waiting for Elmer he made all haste to reach the old sailor's cabin; but caution seemed to have become a part of his nature since he helped steal the money, and it led him to push aside the bushes and take a look at the bay outside. One look was enough.

“By gracious! Elmer,” he exclaimed, unloosing his hold of the bushes and sinking down on the ground all in a heap, “we are too late—Pet has come back!”

“No!” gasped Elmer, greatly astonished; “what could have brought him back so early?”

“I give it up; but he’s out there, as sure as you are a foot high, and is throwing fish out of the sailboat into his skiff.”

Filled with fear, Elmer crept to Lon’s side and peeped through the bushes. Sure enough, the old sailor was there; and he seemed to have been more than usually successful that day, for the way he was throwing fish out fairly took their breath away. What was to be done now? They could not go into the house by the front way, as they did before, for Pet was in plain sight and would surely see them. There was only one thing to do—they had the money, and were obliged to keep it.

“Well, we’ve done the best we could, and that old fellow ought to have stayed away half an hour longer,” said Lon, taking off his

hat and wiping big drops of perspiration from his forehead; "he has a fair chance to make burglars of us."

"Oh, I guess not," answered Elmer; "we didn't sneak into his shanty when he was asleep."

"No matter for that; we unlocked the door when we went in, and that makes burglars of us as sure as you live."

"But we mustn't let him bring that charge against us," said Elmer, who grew frightened whenever Lon spoke of what they had done; "let's take the money and hide it."

"That's the only thing that is left to us," replied Lon, looking around in the hope of finding some good place in which to conceal the evidence of their guilt. "We mustn't take it away from here. If we should chance to meet some one on the road, he would naturally inquire what we had in the box, for it's too big to put in a pocket."

"And another thing has occurred to me," said Elmer, seating himself on a convenient log, with the box by his side; "if we hide it, and then want a dollar of it to spend, how will

we get it? Somebody would see us spending that money, and who knows but that he would tell some one else about it?"

"Ow! Ow!" cried Lon, burying both hands in his hair; "the more we talk about it, the bigger scrape we seem to be in. Pet has all his fish in the skiff, and now he's coming ashore," he added, peering through the bushes once more. "Let's put it under the log you are sitting on and dig out from here; we can easily remember where it is, and it'll do until we can find some other place to put it."

It did not take boys long to scrape away the leaves and brush that the wind had piled against the log, and placing the box in the hole thus formed, they pushed the leaves back again, threw some twigs over the spot, seized their wheels, and lost no time in putting the woods between them and the sailor's cabin. One part of their work was done, but where would they be when Pet turned the "village upside down" to find what had become of his pension-money?

Meanwhile the old sailor was making good time toward the beach. He had had remark-

able luck that day, and was calculating how much money he was going to have to place with his pension-money in that box, and "patted himself on the back," as he always did, when he thought of the funds he was keeping from Mr. Barry.

"Old Barry may be all right, and I might be fooling myself in keeping so much money from him," reflected Pet, looking over his shoulder to see how much farther it was to the beach. "Frank advises me to make a settlement with him, and I believe I'll do it. But what shall I do with the money after I get it? It looks mighty mean to ask a man to shell out when he's doing the best he can for you."

When Pet drew near the beach he gave one or two strong strokes on the oars to run his skiff's bow high up on shore, and then, getting out, walked through the gate to a shed behind the house. When he came in sight again he had a basket in each hand, into which he proposed to put the fish as fast as cleaned and carry them to a fish-dealer, who sent them to the New York market.

Why was it that the old sailor did not

look down as he passed through the gate? Had he done so he would have seen the prints of wheels there, and by following them he would have gone straight to the place where his money was concealed. But Pet, never dreaming that anybody would come to rob him, began whistling a tune—the only one he knew, in fact—and went ahead with his work. In due time his fish were cleaned, and putting them into a wheelbarrow, he trudged off to the fish-dealer's. To see him when walking, one would hardly have supposed he had a wooden leg. He moved along so rapidly that anyone with two good legs would have been troubled to keep pace with him.

“Well, Pet, you are at home early,” said the fish-dealer, as the old sailor wheeled his barrow in front of the door. “How many have you this time?”

“About a hundred pounds,” replied Pet; “but I can tell better when I see them on your scales.”

“You must have left some fish out there, of course.”

“To be sure I did; but when ‘a sweet

little cherub that sits up aloft to keep watch for the life of poor Jack' told me I had enough, I stopped. You don't believe in that little cherub, do you?"

"No, I don't; whenever I go out on the bar to catch fish I catch all I can."

"Yes, and the next time you go you don't get any. I believe in that cherub every time. I'll catch fish to-morrow and the next day, and when the third day comes I won't go at all. I'll stay home and work in my garden."

Pet was noted for his success in fishing, and more than one man had tried to get his secret; but the old sailor resolutely refused to tell, giving as his reason that if he told it to everybody, 'a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft' would tell him it was a secret no longer, and she would withdraw her influence from him, leaving him to catch fish in any way he could. The truth of the matter was, as we have said, Pet got the signs of the Zodiac from Frank Ingram, and he did not believe in telling everyone of it, for then everybody would be as successful at catching fish as he was.

When the fish were weighed and the money

paid over, Pet, with his wheelbarrow, started for home, after reaching which he took particular pains to put under the shed, out of the weather, the baskets and other articles he had used, and then proceeded to his house.

“I don’t know what makes me think so,” reflected Pet, as he produced his key from his pocket, “but somebody has been here; I feel it in my bones.”

But when the door was opened Pet saw at a glance that everything in the room was just as he had left it—all except the chair, which the boys had not taken pains to put back where they found it. But that did not bother him any. He concluded he had left it there because he was in a hurry to get out on the bay. He wanted first to have a smoke, and after that he would have his dinner. He filled his pipe, and was on the point of going into the kitchen to get a match, when his eyes fell upon the overturned coffee-pot in the trough. Not having been replaced in an upright position, it had fallen over, and the contents had all run out.

“I swan to man!” said the old sailor, open-

ing his eyes in surprise; "I never put the coffee-pot that way. And here's the bread, which I always place on the starboard side, has got over here to port; and this meat, which ought to be amidships, has got over to port, too! What in the world is up?"

Pet stood there, with his pipe in one hand and a match in the other, turning the matter over in his mind, and then, with a yell and a bound that was really remarkable for a man with only one leg, he leaped from the kitchen into the living room and looked up at the picture; another leap put him on the chair, a quick movement tore down the picture, and the bricks in the wall were revealed to him.

"Who-pee!" roared the sailor in tones loud enough to have been heard a mile away; "I've been robbed!"

There was nobody to receive the bricks, but Pet did not care for that. With eager haste he threw them aside until he came to the cavity in which the box that contained his money had been hidden. It was empty!

CHAPTER XI.

PET IN LUCK.

NO two boys ever rode faster, even when engaged in a race, than did Lon and Elmer when they found the road fairly before them. They leaned over the handle-bars, and if there had been a prize waiting for them at their homes they could not have gone at a greater rate than they did while passing Mrs. Ingram's house. She saw them as they were going by, and drew a contrast between those two boys and her own.

"They have nothing to do but race about on their wheels all day," she murmured, "while Bob and Frank have to work for a living. If those lads live to be of age they will have money coming to them, while my boys will get just what they can earn. But they are good boys, and I don't know what I should do without them. Frank will have some money when he comes back, and then I

want to see Russell just as soon as he can get here."

The boys kept up their fast gait until they reached Mr. Barry's house, and even then did not stop; they went around the dwelling until they reached the tool-shed, where Lon got off his wheel, took his hat from his head, and wiped the perspiration from his face.

"I tell you, Elmer, I wish I could live this morning over again," said he, placing his wheel beside the building and looking around for a resting-place. "I'm disgusted with myself."

"Disgusted? That's no name for it!" asserted Elmer. "You'll be disgusted a good many times before the examination is over."

"What do you suppose they'll do to us, any way?" asked Lon, who was anxious to discover the best possible chance for escape.

"Well, everything we've done is bound to come out on us," declared Elmer; "I don't see any show to get out of it."

"And to think of those two boys down there!" said Lon, throwing all the disgust he could into his tones—"did you see their mother looking out at us as we came by?"

"I did; and I'll bet you she was drawing a contrast between our position and Frank's. To tell you the truth, I wish I was in Frank's shoes this minute. If that stuff is not stolen, he's going to make some money by his trip to New York."

"If Russell is as good as he used to be, that ambergris is stolen before this time. But what's the use of crying over spilt milk? We have the money, and our next job must be to think up some way of spending it. I'm sorry we had to leave it so close to the owner's cabin. Let's take a basket, or something to cover it up, and go down there and get it."

Elmer was not in any hurry to engage in this work. The proceeds of their theft were safe now, and why not leave the money where they had put it until the excitement had blown over? He did not want to see that tin box around.

"Where will we put it after we get it?" he asked. "You'll have to hide it here on your place, for I don't want to be bothered with it."

"Of course you don't," answered Lon an-

grily ; " but you'll be ready to take the money whenever I go after it. You'll spend more of it than I will."

" We'll see about that when the time comes. But, Lon, there's one thing I never will do—I'll never go out with those poachers again," said Elmer ; and he gave emphasis to his remark by shaking his head ruefully. " I wish to goodness I had never gone out with them in the first place; I never thought that my desire to see how the thing was done was going to get me into this scrape."

" It hasn't got you into any scrape yet," returned Lon in surprise ; " I don't know what you mean."

" Mother says that if people don't get better all the time, they get worse—that one bad thing leads to another. If I hadn't gone out with those poachers I never would have thought of visiting old Pet's cabin."

" Oh !" said Lon. " Well, we have the money, and now what are we going to do with it? It's too late to take it back."

" I don't see what we can do but keep it. I'll go to the well for a drink of water, and you

can look up a basket ; let it be big enough to cover the box."

The boys separated, and when they came together again about five minutes later Elmer was wiping his mouth and Lon was engaged in tucking a piece of cloth, which he intended to use to cover up the sailor's money, into a basket that he had found in the tool-house. Without saying a word they got on their wheels and rode slowly out of the yard. They did not travel as fast as they did when they went there. The place where the box was concealed was but a short distance from Pet's cabin, and the old sailor may have found out that he was robbed and be looking everywhere for his money. Neither of the boys made any remark, but each knew what the other was thinking of.

"We had better reconnoitre a little before we go near the spot," suggested Lon. "We'll leave our wheels here out of sight and see what the old fellow is doing."

The boys accordingly got off their wheels and made their way through the bushes until they could obtain a view of the old sailor's

house. There was nobody in sight, the door of the house stood open, and no doubt Pet was around on the other side, smoking his pipe.

"Why didn't the old fellow go off somewhere?" queried Elmer. "That would have given me a chance to undo what I did two or three hours ago."

"Well, as he's around the house somewhere, and of course we can't put the money back," said Lon, "let's go and hunt it up. By George! Elmer, I believe somebody's been here!"

The boys, still moving cautiously, and being careful not to snap a twig, had come within sight of the log which concealed their treasure, and it was no wonder that Lon thought somebody had been there, or that Elmer stood appalled by the discovery they made. The log had been twisted out of its bed and moved to one side, and the box was gone, but the leaves and twigs which they had used to cover it were there yet.

"Why, Elmer, what in the world!" faltered Lon.

"Don't ask me anything about it," whis-

pered Elmer, faintly. "Somebody must have seen us put the money here, and removed it when we went away."

"It isn't around here anywhere, is it?" questioned Lon, who could hardly believe he was not dreaming.

"No, it isn't here—no one could go to work and move that log without seeing the box. Let us go home."

"How can we go home?" demanded Lon, who was driven almost wild by the discovery he had made. He was going recklessly about among the bushes, looking everywhere for the box, and utterly regardless of the noise he made.

"If you go on in that way you'll alarm Pet, who'll come out to see what's the matter," said Elmer.

"But don't you see we can't go home with this thing hanging over us?" explained Lon, who seated himself upon the log and once more wiped the perspiration from his face. "Just think of a thousand dollars!—and we went to all the risk of taking it and putting the box right where somebody could get it!

I'll bet you one thing, and that is that the old poacher had a hand in it!"

"Russell?" queried Elmer.

"Russell or Perkins—one or the other."

"I believe you're right," affirmed Elmer, who had not thought of that before. "Then they have two things against us—poaching and burglary."

"If I get out of this scrape, I tell you I'm going to lead a life that will be above reproach," asserted Lon, emphatically. "Stay there!" he added, lifting up his basket and throwing it as far as he could into the bushes. "Now, let's go home."

"What made you do that?" asked Elmer, in some alarm. "Pet will get some detectives to come here and examine things, and how long do you suppose it'll be before they'll trace that basket to you? You had better take it home."

"That's so," said Lon, after thinking a moment; "we want to remove all traces from us that we can."

Lon lost no time in recovering the basket, and then he and Elmer started for their

wheels. There was no one in sight when they reached the road, and they made good time on their way home. They went around the house to the tool-shed, and when Lon had put away the basket they then sat down and talked over the events of the morning; but the longer they talked the more bewildered they became. Who had the money? That was a question they could not begin to decide.

If they had not thought that Pet was very ignorant they could have guessed where the money went. When he found that the place which concealed his tin box was empty, and had got through yelling out that he had been robbed, he straightway sobered down and became himself again. He knew that his place had been visited and his money taken since five o'clock in the morning; the hour at which he went out to fish, and that, consequently, the box must have been carried off by somebody who lived close to him.

"And I'm going to find out who they are," said Pet, getting down from the chair and placing his pipe on the table. "They must

have left some tracks about here, and I'll see if I can follow them up."

Out on the porch he stumped, and spent some time examining the lock, but he could find nothing there. The lock worked as usual, as he found when he inserted his key into it. Along the gravelled walk that led to the gate he could see nothing, either; but outside, close beside the fence, he saw something that made him open his eyes—the tracks made by a couple of wheels which Lon and Elmer had ridden up to the gate.

"Well, I swan to man!" exclaimed the old sailor, in profound astonishment. "Did them boys take my money? They have more'n they want already; but, after all, I ain't surprised at it."

From the gate to the bushes in which the boys had taken refuge when they got the money the trail was very plain, and in a few minutes Pet came to the little cleared space and the log under which the box was hidden. He observed that there were leaves scattered all around, but that at one portion of the log they were heaped up against it; and, further-

more, that there were marks of a stick in the soft earth, as if the party who deposited the leaves wanted to move them faster than he could with his hands.

“I wonder if my money is in here?” thought the old sailor. “I hate to say it, but I think that Lon and Elmer have been here, and I believe they are the guilty ones. If I find it here, I’ll get the lawyer that Frank told me about and have a settlement with Lon’s father; he’s got a heap of my money, and he must give it up. If his boy will steal, what’s the reason *he* won’t?”

The sailor was not the man to take a stick and dig away the leaves to find his property. He bent his back, placed his hands under one end of the log, set his teeth together, straightened up, and the log came with him. Almost before he dropped it he saw his box there.

“Who-pee!” again yelled the sailor.

It is hard to tell what Pet meant by this expression. He uttered the word “Who-pee!” when he found he had been robbed, and he used it now when he discovered that his money was safe.

"That's my box, if I ever saw it!" said he, dropping the log and catching up his money. "I declare, the scoundrels have opened it!" he continued, examining the lock. "If they have taken a cent out of it they must give it up, or I'll have the constable after them before they can wink twice."

Pet closed the box and made his way toward the cabin. His first care was to light his pipe, and his second to bring out a piece of paper and a pencil. With these in his hand he went around on the other side of the house where shade was plenty, and proceeded to count the contents of his box. As fast as he counted out one hundred dollars he made a mark with his pencil on the paper and placed the money in the box. It was while he was thus engaged that Lon and Elmer paid a second visit to his cabin to secure the proceeds of their guilt.

It took Pet fully an hour to make up his mind that none of the bills were missing; and having at last come to the conclusion that every one of his thousand dollars was there, he filled his pipe again, placed the box within

easy reach, and settled back in his chair to decide what he ought to do next.

“Things have come to a pretty pass when a man can’t leave a little money in his house and go off on the bay without having somebody slip in and steal it,” said Pet, in disgust. “Nothing ain’t safe nowhere. If you put it in bank, where most folks put their money, the bank ups and fails, and there you are. There’s one thing about it: Frank never lost no money yet, and I’ll put this in his hands before I’m an hour older. He has got back from New York by this time, and I want to see how much he made by following my advice.”

With Pet, to think was to act. Holding fast to his box, he locked the door and took his way along the path that led to the road. Had he been a little earlier he would have seen Lon and Elmer going that way, and if he could have read their thoughts he would have found that they were dismayed over the loss of the money. They cared for the money, of course, but what distressed them more than anything else was the fear that it had fallen

into the hands of some one who would make trouble for them if they tried to find out who he was.

At the end of half an hour Pet walked into Mrs. Ingram's doorway, and seated on the back porch he found Frank and his mother. They were evidently talking about something that had an enlivening effect upon them, for their faces wore a very different expression from Pet's. Frank looked very much like a gentleman in his good suit, and Pet involuntarily touched his hat to him.

"Halloo!" exclaimed Frank; "where are you going at this time of day, and what have you got in that tin box?"

"I have a thousand dollars in it," answered Pet, "and I brought it up here to ask you to take care of it for me."

"Are you going away?" asked Frank, pulling a chair forward for the sailor. "But what's the matter with you, anyway?" he continued, for the first time noticing the expression on Pet's face. "You look as though the whole world had gone back on you."

"A boy who'll poach on as good a man as

Mr. Adams will do almost anything else—won't he?" asked Pet.

"Of course he will; he'll steal, if he has a good chance."

"So I have found. See there—the thieves broke the lock," said Pet, opening the lid so that Frank and his mother could view the inside of the box. They had never seen so much money before.

"Why, do you carry that money around with you?" asked Frank. "It's the greatest wonder in the world that you haven't been robbed!"

"That's my fish- and pension-money," answered the old sailor. "Would you take fifty dollars and go without a leg? I tell you I've been robbed, and this day, too."

"You got the money back again, I see," said Frank.

"Yes—and because they left some tracks for me to follow up. Do you know who the fellows were?"

"No, I don't. Is it anybody who lives about here?"

"Yes, it is; one of them was here to see

you last night. To make a long story short, it was Lon Barry and Elmer Payne."

Frank and his mother settled back in their chairs and looked at each other without speaking. They knew that something would happen to those two boys, judging from the company they kept, but they did not think it was going to happen so soon.

CHAPTER XII.

SURPRISE ALL AROUND.

“WHY, Pet,” said Frank, after thinking the matter over for a moment, “are you sure you’re right? Lon Barry wouldn’t steal anybody’s money, would he?”

“Perhaps I’m wrong, and I hope to goodness I am,” said Pet doubtfully. “Old Barry has been mighty good to me all these years, and somehow I don’t like to accuse his boy of stealing; but Lon and Elmer came down to my house on their wheels—you don’t know of any other fellows about here who ride wheels, do you? I followed the wheel-prints up, and found my money under a log in the woods.”

Having got his auditors fairly interested in the matter, Pet went on and told the story of the robbery as far as he knew it. What angered him as much as anything was the havoc they made among the victuals he left in the trough of the table.

"They didn't put 'em back as they found 'em, but went to work and mixed 'em up in all sorts of ways," said the old sailor. "They even turned the coffee-pot upside down, so that I had to make some more."

"Mother, you know something about this," said Frank, who watched the gleam of intelligence that came into his mother's face once in a while as Pet was telling his story.

"All I know about it is this," replied Mrs. Ingram; "I saw those boys pass up and down the road four times to-day. The first time they did not have anything, but the next two times Lon had a basket on his arm."

"They intended to carry the tin box off in that basket," said Pet, doubling one huge hand and striking the other with it. "Why didn't they wait until after dark?"

"Well, Pet, now you have your money back, are you going to prosecute those fellows?"

"That's one thing I want to see you about," answered Pet; "I don't know whether to set the law going against them or not."

"You'll find it queer work, if you do. You didn't see the boys have the money?"

"No, I didn't," replied Pet.

"You only suppose they had it. I guess you'll have to get better evidence than that, if you want to pass it in a court of law."

"Well, perhaps I will," said Pet, looking thoughtfully at the ground. "But there's one thing I have determined on; I sha'n't keep that money hidden in my house any longer. Frank, you may take care of it for me."

"I don't see it!" declared Frank hastily; "our house is just as liable to be robbed as yours. If I take care of that money I'll put it in the bank."

"Well, I swan to man!" exclaimed the old sailor; "you might as well give it to those boys at once! I don't want to lose it as bad as that!"

"If I had one hundred thousand dollars, and couldn't invest it in any way, I would carry it to the bank before I slept to-night," said Frank. "It would be safe there."

"Couldn't you take it and put it under your bed?" asked Pet. "No one could get it out without your knowing it."

"I could do that, but I don't want to. Besides, the lid of the box is broken."

"What difference does that make? I would risk your taking anything out of it. You may want some money to pay off that mortgage, you know; then it would come mighty handy."

"Thank you; this is the second time you have offered to do that, and I assure you I shall never forget it. But how in the world should I ever pay you?"

"If I'm willing to run that risk, whose concern is it?" asked Pet, with a knowing wink. "If nobody ever finds fault with you for not paying him money, you may bet your bottom dollar that Pet Wheelock won't."

"Well, Pet, I don't think I shall ever have to call on you for money," said Frank, and anybody could see that he was more than delighted with the result of his visit to New York. "I sold my ambergris to-day, and what do you think I am to receive for it?"

"Blessed if I know," confessed Pet, who became elated at once, "but I hope they gave you something nice for it."

"So they did. A manufacturing chemist told me that if I had as much ambergris as I thought I had, he would give me two thousand dollars for it."

"There, now!" exclaimed Pet, clapping his hands; "you see you didn't lose anything by not taking Perkins's offer for it."

"I know it," said Frank, rising from his chair. "I have it in the cellar, packed up and ready to go, and I would like you to see if you think there's straw enough in the barrel to make it ride easy. You go around to the bulkhead and I'll soon let you in."

Pet lingered to exchange a word or two with Mrs. Ingram, and Frank went into the house after the keys of the cellar door. They heard him open it and go down the stairs, and a moment afterward a smothered exclamation came from him.

"Pet!" called a frightened voice, "come down here! I've been robbed!"

"I swan to man!" ejaculated Pet, dropping his box and hurrying around to the bulkhead; "it seems that 'Robbery!' is the cry all over. Another man's house has been broken into!"

When he and Mrs. Ingram reached the bulkhead they found that Frank was just lifting one side of it off. In his hand he held the stick with which it had been fastened.

"Are you sure it is gone!" inquired his mother.

"As sure as I can be," replied Frank; and it was easy enough to tell, from the way he spoke, that he was very much depressed. "Look here—there's where they rolled the barrel before they lifted it on their shoulders. You have your money, Pet, but I'll never get my stuff back."

"Why, how did it happen?" asked Pet, who was so bewildered that he could scarcely speak.

"Hold on till I let some light down here, and then we'll look into things," said Frank; "they must have moved very quietly, not to have awakened us."

The plan pursued by the robbers was easy to understand. In the first place, they had gone to one of the outside windows which was enclosed by a wire screen. To remove this screen with a knife was no trouble at all, and

then they had to break one of the panes of glass to get at the catch-hook. That was the only sound they made, and if the noise of the broken pieces of glass falling on the floor failed to arouse the sleepers, so much the better for them. They probably drew off into the bushes to wait until the alarm had subsided; but no one appearing, they went on with their work.

To slip the hand in and throw the catch was another easy matter, and then Perkins, who was the smaller man of the two, slid into the cellar, took the fastenings off the door, and opened the bulkhead so that Russell could go down. There was only one barrel there that was headed up, and after shaking it and smelling at the head for a minute or two they decided they had what they wanted, and carried it up the bulkhead stairs. Before they went they put everything just as they found it—all except the fastenings on the door. They closed the window, drew the door partly shut, let down the covering of the bulkhead, shouldered their prize, and marched away through the darkness. Frank explained all

this to his mother and Pet, and when he got through, Mrs. Ingram said,

“You speak as if you know who did it.”

“I *do* know who did it,” said Frank indignantly—“Russell and his old partner, Perkins, where here last night. Now, Pet, how shall I go to work to get the stuff back?”

“Blessed if I know!” replied the old sailor, who stood there pulling his under lip and thinking that the thing was much too deep for him.

“Russell was the only one here last night, if we except Lon Barry,” continued Frank, “and he wanted me to give him the ambergris and take the mortgage; but how he found out that the stuff was in the cellar beats me.”

“You didn’t tell anyone but Lon that the ambergris was in the cellar,” said Mrs. Ingram, “and I rather wondered at you telling him that.”

Frank looked at his mother, and then hunted around on the stone step for a good place to sit down.

“Now, if Lon’s and Russell’s visits were planned, as you said last night, what was

there to prevent Lon from going out and telling Russell where your ambergris was hidden?" his mother went on. "Of course, if he knew where the stuff was, it would be comparatively easy for him to get it."

"I believe you're right," replied Frank. "That's what I get by swinging my tongue too rapidly. The ambergris is gone, and my next job will be to find it. What had I better do first?"

"I wish Mr. Adams was at home," sighed Mrs. Ingram, who, if anything, was more discouraged over the loss of the treasure than Frank was.

All that day she had been buoyed up by the thought that her troubles were over, and she had even indulged in singing while engaged in her household duties, and to have her hopes dashed in this manner was more than she could stand. It was all she could do to keep herself from sitting down on the step beside Frank and enjoying a good, hearty cry.

"But you know he is not at home," responded Frank; "he is off enjoying himself, while I am here——"

Frank did not go any further; he did not want to say anything that would add to his mother's troubles.

"I hardly know who to turn to for advice," continued Frank, "but I guess I'll go and see Frank Wright. He is deputy sheriff, you know, and has been engaged in lots of business of this kind. Do you think of anything better than that, Pet?"

"Blessed if I know!" was the old sailor's reply. "They have probably dug a hole in the ground and hidden that ambergris in it, and you'll have to dig up the whole county before you find it."

"If I could only prove that they had been here after I went to bed I would make them confess it," said Frank.

"You can't make Russell confess to anything," asserted Pet; "he's been shut up time and again for poaching, and yet he says to-day that he's innocent."

"Well, something must be done, and that speedily," insisted Frank, getting up from the step on which he was sitting. "I'm going down to see Wright, at any rate; per-

haps he might lay a trap for them to fall into."

"Well, say, Frank,—what am I to do with that money I left on the porch?" asked Pet.

"Take it home with you, and put it where it will be safe this time," answered Frank. "It seems that your hiding-place was not so safe, after all."

"It beats me how they got onto it. But I sha'n't take that money home—I'm going to leave it here for you to take care of; and if the ambergris don't turn up, you take the money and pay old man Russell. I've heard enough," said Pet, moving his hands up and down in the air before him, "and I won't listen to no more. The money is there, and if you are turned out of house and home you can thank yourself for it. Good-by!"

"Say, Pet, hold on—I want to talk to you!—I want to talk to you about that money!" exclaimed Frank; but the old sailor kept on, pegging down his wooden leg harder and faster than usual, shaking his head and motioning his hands as if he had already heard more than enough.

Having got started, Pet could not be turned back. He went on through the gate and made a bee-line for home.

"Pet is a good fellow,—isn't he?" said Frank, hastily dashing away a tear that for a moment dimmed his eyes. "If every man in the world was like him I would be happier than I am now. Don't look so sober, mother. a know I've lost the ambergris for awhile, but if there's law in this country I'll get it back again. The two thousand dollars will be delayed, but you're going to have it. Here's Pet's money," said he, on reaching the porch; "I think I'll take it up and put it under my bed, as he told me to."

Frank took the box under his arm and started upstairs with it, but the moment the door closed behind him he threw off his assumed calmness, a fierce expression settled on his face, and he clutched his hands till all the blood seemed driven out of them. As for his mother, she threw herself into a chair, rested her head upon the table, and sobbed violently.

"I ought to go down and make Russell tell

me what he has done with that ambergris," mused Frank, who was in a terrible rage. "He has it, and if I once get my hands on him—— Well, I'll see what Bob thinks of the situation."

It had been Frank's intention to awaken Bob and tell him of the loss they had sustained, but when he came within sight of him, and saw him so peacefully stretched out on his couch, he gave up the idea and pushed the box under the bed.

"Let him sleep," murmured Frank—"he has two hours more; then, when he goes down, mother will tell him."

Frank then went down stairs, as unruffled as he was when he left the room but a few moments before. His mother was engaged in sewing, but there were no signs of tears on her face; she was saving them until Frank went away to call upon the deputy sheriff.

"Now I'm off," said he; "when I come back I'll tell you what the sheriff had to say to me."

Frank started off, and to keep up appearances he began whistling as he passed through

the gate; but when he was out of hearing of his mother the whistling stopped, a fierce frown came to his face again, and he showed his rage more freely than before. He went by Mr. Barry's house and was rapidly nearing the village when he saw somebody coming up the road toward him whom he thought he recognized. A second look showed him he was not mistaken; it was Russell, the poacher.

"I swan to man!" ejaculated Frank, unconsciously giving utterance to Pet's favorite expression. "Ain't I in luck? I'll make the fellow tell where that ambergris is hidden," he continued, taking off his coat and throwing it over his arm, "or he'll whip me—— Hold on! Perhaps that isn't the best thing I could do. I'll make him come up to the house and take the money for the mortgage, and then I'll see what I can do with him."

Russell saw Frank at the same instant, and for a moment he stopped and looked on both sides of the road as if he were seeking some way of escape. But there was no side-road

into which he could turn, and after hesitating a little he came on. When he drew nearer, Frank saw that his face was pale; he had seen Frank take off his coat, and the preparations he made for going into a fight alarmed him.

“Halloo!” he exclaimed, with a feeble attempt at a smile—“you are not taking many fish to-day.”

“See here!” replied Frank, who paid no attention to the greeting—“you wanted your money on that mortgage. Well, you come up to my house about nine o’clock—I’m going down to see the sheriff, and probably will not be at home before that time—and bring the mortgage with you, and I’ll give you the amount of money due on it.”

If Frank had suddenly dropped his coat and committed an assault upon Russell, the latter would not have been more utterly confounded. Frank looked sharply at him, and was confirmed in his belief—the poacher knew where that ambergris was.

“Did—did you say that I was to go to your house?” said he as soon as he could speak.

“Yes; come up to the house and I’ll pay the mortgage,” said Frank. “I want you to come to the house for the reason that you won’t care to face mother after what you have done,” he added to himself. “If ever a man was guilty, you are the one.”

“And did you say you would pay the whole of it?” asked Russell, who had not yet fully recovered his presence of mind.

“That’s what I said; is there anything so surprising in that?”

Russell looked around for something to sit down upon, but as there was nothing available for that purpose, he remained standing.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. WRIGHT GOES UP.

“**I** THINK I had better not go to your house,” said Russell, after he had revolved the matter over in his mind. “What’s the reason you can’t come to my house and settle it?”

“Because I want you to face mother after what you have done,” replied Frank, his indignation growing stronger the more he talked to the man. “What have you done with that barrellful of ambergris you took out of the cellar last night?”

“That ambergris? Why, Frank, I haven’t seen it!” exclaimed Russell, trying to look surprised. “Is it gone?”

“Gone? Yes, and you know it, well enough; I am going down to see the sheriff about it now.”

“Well, you needn’t bring him around to see me, because I don’t know any more about

it than the man in the moon," answered Russell. "Where did you keep it?"

"There is no need that you should ask any questions," said Frank. "It's all I can do to keep my hands off you, for you know where it is buried. When you're brought up for examination, you and Perkins will have to answer for your poaching, too."

"I never engaged in poaching in my life!" replied Russell; but his face grew paler than it was before.

"How, then, do you get so many trout to send off to New York? You don't own any streams about here."

"I buy them," he replied—"that's the way I get them."

"Then it will be no trouble to produce the men who sold you the fish. How about your offering Bob money if he would allow you to fish in Mr. Adams's trout streams?"

"I never offered him a cent!" answered Russell. "If he told you that, he told you a—well, he didn't tell you the truth," added the poacher, for he did not like the look that came into Frank's face, or the quick motion

he made to throw his coat down. "Did he tell you I offered him money?"

"No; but he told me you promised to let the mortgage go. Are you coming up to-night after that money?"

"I would like to know where you earned so much," said Russell, anxious to turn the conversation into another channel.

"That's none of your business. I have friends in this town, and a good many of them. I certainly couldn't boast of so many if I was engaged in poaching."

"I wish you wouldn't throw that business up to me, for I never went poaching."

"We'll see about that when the examination takes place. Are you coming up after that money or not?"

"I would like mighty well to have the money, but I don't care to go to your house for it. Suppose I send my wife?"

"That won't do. I must pay the money into your hands or I shall not pay it to anybody. The money is where I can get hold of it, and I don't pay any interest on that mortgage from this date."

Frank had waited longer than he meant to—his temper was getting the better of him—and with these words he put on his coat and resumed his walk toward the village. Russell turned around once in a while and looked at him, shaking his head and muttering the while to himself; and finally, when Frank was out of sight, he picked out a shady place beside the road and sat down.

“I’ve been surprised a good many times in my life, but I was never before so teetotally took back and dumfounded as I am at this minute,” said Russell, taking off his hat and running his fingers through his hair. “Frank has the money to pay that mortgage, and where did he get it? My plan of getting rid of him and his brother isn’t worth a cent. And then, how did he know I found that stuff in the cellar? There’s only one person who spoke to me about that, and he is Lon Barry. He and Elmer are down town now, looking as though they had lost the only friend they had worth living for, and I’ll wait and speak to them about it. If Lon has gone back on me, I’ll get him into a scrape through his poaching.”

“That’s one of them!” said Frank. “Russell stole that ambergris, but he can’t be coaxed into saying anything. Now, the next thing is to find out where he put it.”

A dozen different plans came into Frank’s head while he was walking toward the village, but upon second thought he discarded them all, and made up his mind that he would see the sheriff before deciding upon anything. As he got into the main street of the village, and was looking around with the hope of finding the officer, he came across some other fellows he wanted to see—Lon Barry and Elmer Payne. They were just getting on their wheels to go home, but Frank stepped into the road and motioned for them to stop.

“Halloo! Frank,” cried Lon, but his voice was very weak and trembling; “do you want to see me? Well, I’m in a great hurry, just now; I’ll see you this evening.”

“It won’t take but a minute,” said Frank, laying hold of Lon’s forward wheel and thus bringing him to a standstill; “I want to know if you told Russell I had that ambergris in my cellar.”

“Never!” answered Lon; but a look came into his face which told Frank differently.

“Think again; I didn’t tell anybody but you of it, last night. They went into the cellar, stole the ambergris, and have it buried somewhere; but I’m sure to find it. Did you see them when they took it?”

“No, sir, I did not. I was at home and in bed, where all good boys ought to be.” Then, believing that he had not said enough to satisfy Frank that he knew nothing of the robbery, he continued, “Are you sure it’s gone?”

“I’m as sure of it as Pet was when he came home from his fishing yesterday and found that his cabin had been robbed,” said Frank.

This was too much for Payne. He got off his wheel, drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and hastily wiped the lower part of his face with it. As for Lon, he did not know what to do. He felt that if the ground would open and swallow him it would be a blessed thing. At last he mustered up courage enough to say,

“Has Pet’s cabin been robbed?”

"Yes, and you were close about there when it happened."

"It's no such thing!" exclaimed Payne, now speaking for the first time; "we haven't been near Pet's house for a month."

"No, nor for two months!" chimed in Lon. "I'm sorry to hear that Pet has been robbed, and——"

"Oh, come, now, it's all out on you," said Frank; "you rode your wheels down there when you went to commit the robbery!"

Lon did not know what to say after that; their wheels had betrayed them. They could not lay the blame upon any other riders of wheels in that neighborhood, for they were the only boys who owned bicycles. As Frank said, "it was all out on them," and they did not know how they were going to get clear of it. They kept silent, and Frank looked them squarely in the face; but he could not look them in the eye—they kept their gaze turned away.

"And then, when the examination comes off, I expect there'll be a good deal to say about your poaching," said Frank. "By the

way, there is Sheriff Wright; I want to see him."

Frank released his hold upon Lon's wheel and started off, and Elmer and his companion wheeled away in a contrary direction. But nobody would have supposed they were experts at riding; they went as boys who were just learning, and took up the whole road while they remained in Frank's sight.

The boy found the man he was in search of seated on a drygoods box in front of a clothing store. The box was used as a receptacle for cast-off hats and caps, and was marked on the outside "Two for fifteen cents;" but the sheriff found it a convenient resting-place, and there he was to be found, when off duty, oftener than anywhere else. He was a large man, and did not look as though he could get around fast enough to catch violators of the peace, but he was a noted thief-taker, and it took a sharp man to get away from him.

"Halloo! Frank," said he, as the boy came up. "What's the news up your way?"

"There's news enough, I'm sorry to say,

and I've come to see you about arresting two persons," said Frank.

"Two persons, eh?" This is the first time you have had anyone arrested. What have they done?"

Frank had a long story to relate, and while he was telling it he noticed that the sheriff devoted more time to his cigar and to recognizing the people that went by than he did to paying heed to what was being said to him. He never interrupted Frank at all, who, when he got through, added,

"I don't believe you heard a word of what I've been telling you."

"I heard every word you said," replied the sheriff, with a laugh. "And so you think Russell and Perkins have that ambergris. What is it worth?"

"If I had it in New York this minute I could get two thousand dollars for it."

"Whew!" whistled the sheriff, looking at Frank in surprise. "It pays you to be a fisherman,—don't it? No wonder you want it back. That will lift the mortgage on your place, easy enough."

“Yes; but the trouble is to find it.”

“What would you say if I should tell you by day after to-morrow where that ambergris is hidden?”

“I should think you had a hand in stealing it,” said Frank, promptly; whereupon the sheriff laughed again. “To begin with, Mr. Wright, I haven’t a cent of money.”

“Well, you are going to have some one of these days. A man with two thousand dollars in prospect is not very poor.”

“But I haven’t got it yet.”

“You will have it some day. Now, I think the best thing I can do will be to take out a warrant for Russell and Perkins.”

“That’s my idea,” said Frank; “they are the only ones, except Lon Barry and Elmer Payne, who knew a thing about it. What will you charge them with?”

“I will take them on general principles,” replied Mr. Wright. “A man who will poach will steal. Now, you run home, and when I get ready I will come and see you.”

“Don’t you want me to go with you and swear out the warrant?”

“No; I can do that by myself.”

Frank turned reluctantly away, for he did not approve of the sheriff's way of doing business at all, and Mr. Wright lit a fresh cigar and started for the office of the justice of the peace. When he came out again he bent his steps toward his house and went into the barn, from which he presently emerged driving a two-seated buggy. He was going after two prisoners, and as he was a large man he did not want to sit three on a seat.

Meanwhile Lon and Elmer were making good time toward their homes. How they ever got there they did not know, for it seemed to them they took up the whole width of the road. Lon was silent until they were well out of Frank's sight, and even then he could scarcely find words with which to express his wonder and alarm.

“I tell you, I'm beat!” said he. “Pet has been down to Frank's house and told them all about it.”

“But do you suppose the old sailor found the money?” asked Elmer. “That's what sticks in my crop.”

"He must have ; or, if he hasn't got it, some person came up and showed him the prints of our wheels," answered Lon, almost beside himself when the thought struck him that they should have left their bicycles at home. "If he has it, it's all over with us ; you know how he detests our poaching."

"But no one knows anything about that except Russell and Perkins. Whatever you say, Lon, you must never confess to that ; we'll deny the whole thing."

"That seems to be the only way out of it. A poacher is the meanest and lowest fellow on the face of the earth, and it's mighty clear of my saying that I was ever seen in the company of such a man. But will Pet prosecute us ? That's what we want to know."

"There's only one way to find out ; time will tell. Why, here's Russell now !" exclaimed Elmer, in surprise ; "he seems to be waiting for us, too."

And so he was, for when the wheels came nearly opposite to him he raised his hand as a sign for them to stop. But Lon was not inclined to stop ; there was something in Rus-

sell's countenance that urged him to put more power on his pedals and go ahead faster than ever.

"We're in an awful hurry," said Lon. "To-morrow you can tell us what you have on your mind."

"Hold up! I say," exclaimed Russell; and to show that he meant every word of it he stepped into the road in front of them.

"Well, talk fast, then," answered Lon; "Don't keep us waiting any longer than you can help."

"It's about that ambergris that was stolen last night," said the poacher.

"What ambergris?" asked Lon.

"What ambergris?" repeated Russell, who grew fighting mad in a minute. It flashed upon him that Lon was going to throw all the blame on him. "You don't know all about it, don't you? You told me it was in the cellar, and I went there and got it."

"I don't see how I could have told you where it was, for I didn't know; but if you went where it was and got it, I say bully for you!"

"Well, I don't know whether it was 'bully' for anybody," said Russell, looking down at the ground; "Frank blames you for it."

"Blames me? Why, my goodness! I never saw his amberggris," replied Lon, trying once more to look surprised.

"You told me it was in the cellar,—didn't you?"

"I don't know whether I did or not."

"Yes, you did, and you know it well enough. You mustn't try to go back on me in this way, for if you do I'll have some things to say that will hurt you. But there's another thing I want to speak to you about. In spite of all the risk I ran to steal that amberggris, Frank has the money that is due on the mortgage."

"Why—why, where in the world did he get it?" inquired Lon and Elmer in concert.

"I don't know; it beats my time all hollow. He says I must go up to his house and get it; but I'll be mighty shy of facing that old woman after what I've done; she would turn one look at me, and I'd wish I could go down through the floor."

Lon and Elmer looked at each other, but had nothing to say. Hearing the sound of wagon-wheels, Lon looked behind him, and who should he see coming along the road but Sheriff Wright. Russell recognized him on the instant, and his face, usually pale, turned as red as fire.

"Who has he come after, I wonder?" asked Lon.

"Don't act as though you suspected he has come after anybody," said Russell, moving off the road so as to give him plenty of room to go by. "If we act guilty, no doubt he'll stop and talk to us."

Mr. Wright came on, with his bay mares going at their best, and when he came opposite to where the three were standing he drew up and thrust his hand into his inside pocket.

"Well, Russell," said he, cheerfully, "I found you here instead of going all the way home after you. You can read, I suppose? Just cast your eye over that, and tell me what you think of it."

As he spoke he drew forth an official document and handed it to the poacher.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SHERIFF'S WARRANT.

“WHAT’S that?” asked Russell, stepping back a pace or two and putting his hands into his pockets. “It looks like a warrant, but I want you to understand that I haven’t been doing anything that you can take hold of me for.”

“Haven’t you been doing any poaching lately?” inquired Mr. Wright.

“I haven’t done a thing in that line since you arrested me last fall,” said Russell, emphatically.

“Nor stealing, either?” queried the sheriff.

“No, nor stealing, either,” answered Russell, and he looked the officer squarely in the eye. “Why should I want to steal? I have all I want of my own.”

“Well, get in here,” ordered Mr. Wright, “and perhaps you can explain it so that the justice of the peace will let you go. There’s

somebody going to get himself into a bad snap," he continued, as Russell climbed into the buggy. "Frank Ingram fished ambergris worth two thousand dollars out of the water, and somebody went to his house and stole it."

Mr. Wright did not chirrup to his horses and go ahead, as Lon and Elmer wanted him to do. He seemed perfectly willing to talk, and while doing so he straightened up in his seat and kept a sharp eye on the boys as well as on Russell.

"Well, I swan to man!—that's a heap of money for one to lose," said Russell, who kept his face concealed from the officer as he was getting into the buggy.

"Why, it is burglary!" said Mr. Wright; "and the man, whoever it was, who did the work, did not think of that while he was pulling off the fastenings of the door. He is liable to get from five to ten years in the State's prison for it."

The poacher changed color upon hearing this.

"Now, I am going to find that ambergris the first thing I do," continued the sheriff.

"I know about where it is concealed, and I will get some shovellers up there and go to work at it. But that is not the only thieving that has been going on in this neighborhood. Pet Wheelock had some money hidden——"

"Come on, Elmer—let's go home!" said Lon, who did not care to hear anything further.

"Hold on, boys; what's your hurry?" asked Mr. Wright. "I want you two to know something about this, because you may be able to find the fellows."

"We didn't have anything to do with it, Mr. Wright," said Elmer; "we haven't been near Pet's house in a month."

"That's what I thought; but it is strange that they would go there on wheels, because the marks of them are there—and that proves there was more than one of them—as plain as the nose on your face. You don't know anything about it—do you, boys?"

"No, we don't!" answered Lon, trying to speak as emphatically as he could. "Why did Pet keep so much money hidden in his house?"

"I don't know what his reason was; but he followed the prints of the wheels and got his money. Now, the next thing is to find out whether he is going to prosecute. I calculate to see him when I get back."

"Mr. Wright, did Frank swear out that warrant you have against me?" asked Russell, who had managed in some way to get his wits together sufficiently to think over the charge that had been brought against him.

The poacher had been in the sheriff's hands a good many times during the preceding year, and consequently had learned more about his way of doing business than that officer had any idea of. He had a notion that, when two or more were arrested for the same offence, Mr. Wright would go to the one who showed the most remorse for what he had done and—it did not make any difference to him whether the accused one confessed or not—he would pretend he had the confession, and then he would go to the other with it. In that way he had been able to fasten the crime of guilt when other people thought it impossible. Russell had been thus dealt with once, and he

was determined he would not be caught a second time.

"When did Frank swear out that warrant against me?" again asked Russell. "I would like to know something about it."

"There it is; read it for yourself," said the sheriff, passing over the official document. "But Frank did not have a hand in taking out that warrant; I took it out myself. I went on general principles, you know. Why don't you read it?"

But Russell did not care to read the paper. He settled back in his seat and folded his arms, and the sheriff, having had his talk out, pulled on the reins and started ahead.

"Do you know where Perkins is now?" inquired Mr. Wright.

"The last I saw of him he was at home, engaged in splitting wood," said Russell, gloomily. "I see what you're up to," he added to himself. "When we get to jail you'll put us in different apartments, so that one can't hear what the other has to say to you, and the first slip of the tongue either of us makes you'll call a 'confession,' and then

you'll go to the other one and want him to own up to it. That's a pretty good way to worm the secrets out of a man. I was caught that way last fall, but I'll bet you won't catch me that way another time."

Mr. Wright was in a very good humor as he spoke to his horses and drove away, leaving the two boys in the road. It was true that by the few words he uttered he did not bring a "confession" from either of them, but he was sharp enough to lay the blame where it belonged.

"I have the whole thing in tow just as I wanted it," he mused, knocking the ashes from his cigar. "All the thieves there are in Frank's neighborhood I can lay my hands on as soon as they are wanted. Perkins and Russell must be to blame for the stealing of that ambergris, for Russell showed it too plainly when I arrested him; and those boys are responsible for Pet's robbery. Who would have thought it? They are the sons of rich parents who can give them everything they ask for in reason; and yet they go and steal the earnings of a poor fisherman. It will be

mighty hard to put them in jail, but if Pet says so, I don't see how I am to get out of it."

Lon and Elmer watched the sheriff until a bend in the road hid him from sight, and then they turned and gazed at each other. Finally Lon looked around for a place to sit down.

"Well, what do you think now?" he asked.

"It's nothing more than I expected; but how Mr. Wright got onto it so suddenly beats me," answered Elmer. "Lon, I have a good mind to run away."

"You'll only make a bad matter worse if you try that," replied Lon, frightened by the mention of such a thing. "Think up some other plan."

"Then I'll tell you what we'll do," said Elmer; "it's rather a desperate chance, but if you can see any better way out of this scrape I would like to know it. Let us go home and trust to luck. If Pet Wheelock don't make any fuss about this, well and good; you and I won't say a word. If he's going to have us prosecuted, let us go to him and make a confession. We'll tell him that we took his box for the fun of the thing, and

that if he had stayed away five minutes longer we should have put it back."

"That's a desperate chance, ain't it?" replied Lon, after thinking the matter over. "The old fellow won't believe us."

"We don't care whether he believes us or not," rejoined Elmer; "all we care for is to get him to let up on prosecuting us."

"Well, perhaps it'll work, but I'm afraid of it," answered Lon, pushing his wheel out into the middle of the road. "But even if Pet can be fooled in that way, there are Russell and Perkins—they think they have been arrested for poaching."

"That's something we'll have to think of at some future time," said Elmer, setting out at his best pace for home. "I'll bet you they've been arrested for stealing that ambergris!"

"My goodness! I wish we had never heard of poachers," snarled Lon; and so provoked was he to think that he had fallen among men so low as they were that he lifted his hat with one hand and dug his fingers into his hair. "We've been running with them just a year.

I wish I felt as happy now as I was before we began to associate with them."

The boys were silent all the rest of the way home. When Elmer arrived at his gate he turned into it without taking leave of his friend, and Lon never noticed it, but rode on until he got to his own home, and a few minutes later was sitting beside the tool-shed, with his wheel propped up against it.

"Yes, sir,—I wish I felt as happy now as I was a year ago," thought Lon, leaning his face on his hands and looking down at the ground. "Then I didn't care a cent for Russell and Perkins—they might have been arrested and sent up for a long term of years and I would have thought nothing of it—but I do now. If Russell is arrested for poaching, how long do you suppose it will be before he'll have my name and Elmer's mixed up with it?"

And then something that he had heard the minister speak of during his last Sunday's sermon came into his mind: "Keep thee far from an evil matter."

Meanwhile the sheriff resumed his conversation with the poacher.

“So Perkins was at home, splitting wood, when you last saw him. Then we ought to find him there yet. By the way, do you know anything about that ambergris?”

“No, I don’t,” answered Russell; “I didn’t know Frank had such a thing. If he has lost two thousand dollars by it, he has lost a heap of money.”

“Yes, and you know where the plunder is,” said Mr. Wright to himself. “I guess one night in jail, with a fair prospect of spending from five to ten years of your life in prison, will loosen your tongue a bit; you are not ready to be pumped yet.”

The sheriff kept on his way, going past Frank’s house without seeing anything of the family, and in a few minutes drew up before Russell’s gate. The prisoner had requested permission to get out there and obtain some other clothes which he wanted to wear, and Mr. Wright was willing to grant it. He was obliged to go on half a mile farther in order to get Perkins, and he wanted an opportunity to talk to him while Russell was not about. He did not caution him about running away,

for Russell was too old a hand to attempt that; it would not be long before the whole force of the Island would be aroused and escape would be impossible.

"I will be back here in half an hour, and I want you to be ready to go down and take board with Mr. Nixon," said the sheriff.

"All right, sir; I'll be ready."

Mr. Wright waited to light a fresh cigar and drove on toward the house in which Perkins lived. The man was chopping wood, and when he heard the sound of the wagon-wheels and looked up, his face changed color.

"Aha!" muttered Mr. Wright; "I have safely under cover the two villains who robbed Frank. No man ever looked that way unless he has been doing something contrary to law. Halloo! Perkins—come out here."

There was no help for it, and Perkins had to throw down his axe and go up to the bars. He did not like the way the sheriff smiled at him, for he knew there was something back of it.

"Have you all the clothes you need during your stay in jail until the county court sits?" asked Mr. Wright.

“Stay in jail !” exclaimed Perkins.

“That’s what I said ; here’s a warrant made out for you. Read it.”

“I don’t want to see them things any more !” said Perkins, turning away his head.

“It goes on with a whole rigmarole of stuff, and when I get through with it I sha’n’t know any more than I do now. But as sure as you live, Mr. Wright, I don’t know a thing about that——”

“About what ?” asked the sheriff, indifferently. “Go on, and tell me the balance.”

“I mean that I don’t know what you are arresting me for,” said Perkins, catching his breath in time ; “I haven’t been a-doing of anything.”

“Oh ! all right. Well, get in here, if you have all the clothes you want, and we’ll go to town. It appears to me you had better go in and bid your wife good-by.”

It struck Perkins that that would be a good idea ; he had been so completely taken aback by the suddenness of his arrest that for a few moments he could not think of anything. He went into the house, and presently came out

again with his wife, who held her apron to her eyes as if she had been crying; but the sheriff saw there was nothing resembling tears on her cheeks.

"It is going to be a warm day, Mrs. Perkins," remarked Mr. Wright, taking off his hat and wiping the big drops of perspiration from his forehead; "I would like to be out sailing now."

"Mr. Wright, my man don't know no more about that ambergris than the man in the moon!" interrupted Mrs. Perkins, "and I don't believe Frank had any such thing."

"Well, he had something that looked like it, and now it is gone," said the sheriff; "somebody stole it out of his cellar in the night time."

"But it couldn't have been my man; he was at home every blessed minute after sundown."

"Didn't he go out to smoke a pipe with Russell?" asked Mr. Wright.

"No, he didn't. He was at home chopping wood the whole time."

"Well, let him get in here, and we will go

down and tell Mr. Nixon how the thing stands. Good-morning, Mrs. Perkins."

"What were you saying about that ambergris?" asked the sheriff, as the new prisoner climbed into his buggy.

"I say I don't know anything about it," replied Perkins, taken off his guard; "I don't believe that Frank had any such stuff."

"Russell made pretty nearly the same remark," said Mr. Wright.

"Has Russell been arrested, too?" asked Perkins, looking surprised.

"Russell? Oh, yes; he has been arrested, too. You didn't send Lon and Elmer home fast enough last night. You forgot that there were bushes close to the road, and that it would be an easy matter for them to watch you when you raised that barrel on your shoulder——"

"I never did it in this world!" protested Perkins, growing really surprised now. "Did Russell say that?"

"He said something like it; I forget just what words he used."

"Well, Russell needn't think he's going to throw all the blame on me," said Perkins, angrily; "he lifted it on his shoulder himself and packed it away."

Mr. Wright was listening intently. Perkins was coming around, and he waited for him to tell where they had buried the ambergris, for the sheriff believed that that was what was done with it. But he waited in vain.

"Packed it away where?" asked Mr. Wright, after he had stopped long enough for Perkins to tell what had become of the ambergris.

"That's for you to find out," answered the prisoner with a grin. "You go to Russell and find out."

"Oh, of course; I was foolish for not thinking of that. Russell does not want to spend five or ten years of his life for burglary——"

"We didn't commit no burglary," replied Perkins; "we simply got into his cellar and took it out."

"Who told you it was there?"

"Lon Barry. He went in to borrow a book

of Frank, and so got to talking to him about the ambergris."

"Don't you remember about breaking the window and opening the fastenings on the door?" said Mr. Wright in a very solemn voice. "Well, that constitutes burglary."

Perkins did not know what to say in response to that. He settled back on his seat and looked at the fields which they were rapidly passing. It seemed to him that now he had another charge to answer for; burglary was something he had not thought of.

"I wish to goodness Frank had his ambergris," said he.

"So do I," responded Mr. Wright.

CHAPTER XV.

PUMPING THE PRISONERS.

THE conversation ceased because they were close to the house in which Russell lived. Perkins did not want his companion in guilt to know what he was talking about, and Mr. Wright did not want him to know it, either; he would have plenty of time to "pump" Perkins after he landed him in jail. Russell was at the gate with a small valise in his hand, and his wife was close to him. They had been having a colloquy between themselves, for the newcomers saw Russell grab his wife by the shoulder and shove her back. Remembering that he had often gained a point by listening to his prisoners' helpmeets, Mr. Wright was prompt to seize this opportunity.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Russell," said he, raising his hat. "You feel badly about Russell going to jail, I suppose, but I don't know how the thing can be helped."

“Mr. Wright, that man don’t know any more about the——”

“Hold your yawp, old woman!” interrupted Russell; “do you want to give me away the first thing?”

“No; but I want him to know——”

“Drive on, Mr. Sheriff!” exclaimed Russell, clambering hastily into the buggy. “What that woman wants to say is that I haven’t been poaching for a year or more.”

This was not the only thing the woman had to say, however. She raised her voice as she came outside the gate; but as loud as she talked, Russell talked louder, until they finally got out of hearing. Then he settled down as if he felt at his ease, deposited his valise between his legs, turned toward Perkins, and remarked,

“So it seems you are in for it, too. Do you know what you have been arrested for?”

“Not any mor’n if I was in Asia,” replied Perkins.

“I offered both of you the warrant, but you didn’t want to read it,” said Mr. Wright.

“You might as well take Latin or Greek

and try to make sense out of it as to pore over that thing," answered Perkins, with disgust. "I know *I* haven't been doing anything wrong."

Mr. Wright gave up his desire to "pump" the prisoners, for it would not do to question them too closely while they were together. He listened attentively to all they said, however, but he could learn nothing more than what he already knew. In process of time he drew up before the jail, and found the door open and the jailer, Mr. Nixon, sitting inside of it smoking his pipe. He looked up when Mr. Wright drew rein, but did not seem to be at all astonished when he found out who his prisoners were.

"Have you room in your institution for a couple of wayfarers?" asked the sheriff. "If you have, we want a bunk for the night."

"Oh, yes; we've got room enough," assented Mr. Nixon. "Boys, I don't know what to think of your coming back here so often. What have you been doing this time?"

"Don't ask me!" growled Russell; "I don't know any more about it than you do."

“Put one of them up stairs, Mr. Nixon, and the other one down below,” said the sheriff, with a sly wink at the jailer; “then they won’t be in each other’s way.”

Mr. Wright saw his prisoners disposed of in the way he had suggested, got into his buggy, and drove to his barn. Then he put out the horses, lit a fresh cigar, and started toward the dry-goods box in front of the clothing store. Here he remained until supper time, when he wended his way to the jail again, proceeded to the room in which Russell was confined, and drew him to one side, in front of one of the windows.

“Now, Russell,” said he, in an impressive voice, “I am ready to hear all you have to say about that ambergris. Hold on a minute until I get through talking,” he continued, seeing that the prisoner squared himself and lifted his hand as if he were about to say something emphatic. “Somebody has been talking to me since you have been in here.”

“Who—who was it?” inquired Russell, greatly surprised.

If Mr. Wright had mentioned the names

of those who had been talking to him since he conducted Russell to jail he would have had to name half the people in town. Almost everybody who passed him while he was sitting on that dry-goods box stopped to ask him what the news was, and when the sheriff said he did not have anything that was worth naming they went on their way. But Russell thought it was somebody who knew something about that ambergris, and he was impatient to find out who it was.

"I was taught never to repeat names and tales," answered Mr. Wright.

"Has my old woman been here?" asked the prisoner, after thinking a moment.

"No, she hasn't been here, but I think I could find out something by calling on her before you get out."

"Then I'm not afraid of your finding out anything," said Russell, with a long-drawn sigh. "She knows where I was last night, and all about it."

"Then you won't tell me what you did with the ambergris?"

"I tell you I don't know a thing about it,"

replied Russell; and the manner in which he uttered the words seemed to show that he was getting angry.

"You are sure you don't know where you put it when you took it off your shoulder?"

"I—I didn't put it on my shoulder at all."

"Your words say one thing and your actions another. You know where that ambergris is stowed away, and the next thing will be to make you tell where it is," thought Mr. Wright. "I suppose I shall have to go and see your wife," he said aloud.

"She don't know where I put it!" exclaimed Russell, speaking before he thought. "I mean I didn't have the ambergris at all," he added a moment later.

"Well, have it your own way. Good-night."

"Say! where are you going?" asked Russell; and his actions proved that he was becoming anxious. "There's nobody out there who can tell you where that ambergris is."

"Your wife knows, and I guess I had better go and see her."

Mr. Wright slowly withdrew from the room, hoping that Russell would call him back ; but in this he was disappointed. He closed the grated door of the hall very deliberately, locked it, and saw Russell, with his back to him, looking out of the window.

“That fellow is too sharp to be caught,” he reflected, as he mounted the stairs that led to Perkins’s room. “I guess he can’t forget his experience of last fall. Well, Perkins,” he continued, opening the door and finding him alone, “how do you feel by this time? Where’s your company?”

“I’m here all alone,” answered Perkins, with some apprehension in his tones, “and I don’t like to stay up here in this gloomy hole. Let me go down to where Russell is ; there are three or four men there, and they are better than nothing. There isn’t a mattress or a blanket in a single one of these cells ; they’ve been whitewashing, or something.”

“Well, I will have you provided for,” said he. “But first I want you to tell me about that ambergris. You told me that Russell lifted it to his shoulder and packed it away

somewhere, but you did not say where. Where did he take it to?"

"That's a question for Russell himself to answer," replied Perkins doggedly.

"Russell has made up his mind that he does not want to go to the State's prison for five or ten years, and I don't suppose you do, either," remarked the sheriff, considerably disappointed, "so you had better tell me."

"Let me go down and stay with Russell, and if he'll tell you where the thing is hidden, I'll back it up," said Perkins; "that's the most that I can tell you."

The sheriff now became satisfied that it was useless to question the two men in regard to what had been done with the ambergris, and started to go out. When the prisoner saw him moving away he repeated his request that he might not be left alone in that upper story of the jail, and the sheriff promised that he should be attended to. He walked down the stairs very much disappointed. The Island covered a good stretch of country, and since neither of the prisoners would tell him where

the ambergris was, he would have a good deal of digging to do before he could find it.

"They are much too sharp to be pumped," said Mr. Wright, when he found himself alone with the jailer. "Russell don't know anything about it, and Perkins went so far as to confess that Russell raised it to his shoulder and carried it away somewhere. When he said that, I thought I had him, sure; but now he tells me that Russell will have to decide it."

"Carried what away?" asked Mr. Nixon; and this proved that the sheriff had not taken him into his confidence.

"Why, the ambergris that Russell stole out of Frank Ingram's cellar last night. It was worth two thousand dollars, too."

Leaving the jailer lost in surprise, Mr. Wright walked away to his dry-goods box again, before he thought of the promise he had made Perkins. That brought about another trip to the jail, and after that he went home.

"I don't see the use of Russell denying it," mused he, as he lit another cigar and seated himself on the porch. "He is bound

to go to jail anyway, and his sentence will be easier if he tells the truth."

It was just daylight when Mr. Wright opened his eyes. While he lay in bed, wondering what new scheme he could work to induce one of the prisoners to tell him what had become of the ambergris, a rapid and long-continued knocking at his front door hurried him into his pantaloons and slippers and took him out to see what the trouble was.

"Oh, Mr Wright!" exclaimed Mr. Nixon, who paced up and down the porch as if he was almost beside himself. "The very thing you predicted in regard to that jail has come to pass. Your two prisoners are gone!"

"Gone!" repeated the sheriff. "Well, it is nothing more than I expected."

"Yes, they're gone; skipped—cleared out. They must have worked a long time to slip the bolts in their cell-doors, but after they got out into the hall it was no trouble for them to remove the bars. Now, what is to be done?"

"Did the other prisoners go, too?"

"No. I find upon inquiry that they heard

the two at work, but being in for slight offences they did not think it worth while to get out. I hope you won't blame me."

"I blame nobody but the grand jury," said Mr. Wright. "They knew the jail was in a bad condition, and I have often spoken to them about it."

"Well, are you going to offer any reward for them?"

"No, I will have them back there in due time. Let them go."

Mr. Wright went back and pulled on the remainder of his clothes, and while doing so his mind was exceedingly busy. The question to decide was, What would Russell and Perkins do, now that they were free? Beyond a doubt they would dig up the ambergris—perhaps that was done already—take it somewhere, and sell it; but where would they take it? That was something that required deep study, and in order that he might think to the best advantage he lit a cigar and sat down to ponder over it.

"I must warn the authorities of the villages about here to be on the lookout for two fel-

lows who have ambergris to sell," soliloquized Mr. Wright, as he deposited his feet on the railing of the porch. "Then I guess I am all right. I'll have to wait until the telegraph office opens; in the meantime I will go and see Frank."

Having settled this matter to his own satisfaction, the sheriff evidently gave no further thought to Frank's affairs, but pulled some papers from his pocket, and was deeply interested in them until the breakfast-bell rang. After deliberately eating his share of it he brought out his bay mares, which were hitched to a single buggy, in which he took his seat, and was whirled away to Frank's house. But before going there he concluded he would call on the wives of the escaped prisoners, thinking he might be able to gain some knowledge from them. Moreover, he believed that Russell and Perkins would go home as soon as they had left the jail behind them, and that he might perhaps catch them there. He drove up to Russell's door as if he were in a great hurry, jumped out of his buggy before it came to a standstill, ran up the steps, and

found Mrs. Russell engaged in turning a loaf of bread which she had but a few minutes before put into the oven, who was so surprised on seeing him that she came near dropping what she had in her hands.

"You don't know how badly you frightened me!" she gasped.

"I didn't mean to frighten you," said Mr. Wright, running his eye all around the room, and seeing at a glance that Russell was not there; "but do you know that your man slipped out of jail last night?"

"There, now!" exclaimed the woman, dropping her hands to her side; "he said yesterday that he wouldn't stay in that jail any longer than he had a mind to."

"Well, he has skipped, and I don't know where he is now," continued the sheriff, helping himself to a chair. "Now, I don't think that was doing right—do you? Here I went and put him into a good jail, with plenty to eat and a nice place to sleep, and he had to go back on me. I wish I could see him for a little while; I would like to talk to him."

"I don't know where he is now," said the

woman ; and there was something about her that made Mr. Wright believe she was telling the truth. "He hain't come near the house. And I wanted to tell you yesterday, but Russell wouldn't let me, that he don't know the first thing about the stuff that Frank has lost ; he never seen it."

After a few commonplace remarks, Mr. Wright was sure that he was on the wrong trail and went out to his buggy again.

Mrs. Perkins received him nearly the same way. She was engaged in her household duties, and there was no sign of Perkins having been there ; so he bid her good-morning and turned about to go to Frank Ingram's.

"This is about the worst case I ever got hold of," thought the sheriff. "Those women know nothing about that ambergris. The thieves got it and hid it, and nobody but themselves know where it is."

He found Frank hoeing in the garden ; for, although very much depressed by the loss of his ambergris, he did not sit down and mope about it, as a great many boys would have

done. He believed in doing the work that was waiting for him, so as to keep his mind always busy. He heard the sheriff calling to him, threw down his hoe, and went to the fence.

"Frank, I am sorry to see you looking so down-hearted," said Mr. Wright, cheerfully. "You don't hear anything about that stuff you lost, do you?"

"No; but I was in hopes you knew something about it," replied Frank. "You look so joyous that I did not know but you had heard something."

"I am sorry to say that I have not found out anything yet," said the sheriff; and with this introduction he went on and told Frank his story. The boy listened attentively, never interrupting him until he got done, and when Mr. Wright proposed that Frank should watch the houses of those prisoners, especially Russell's, Frank could not think of anything else to do."

"The first thing they will do will be to dig up that ambergris, take it away and sell it," said the sheriff; "and as you are right here

on the ground, I think you had better keep an eye open, so that you will know what is going on around you."

"I think that is the only way," answered Frank, as he wished the sheriff good-by and saw him drive away to town. "I tell you," he continued, musingly, "those fellows are pretty sharp. They got out of jail, but they never went home, and are lying out in the woods until after the sheriff has been here. Well, I don't know what I shall do now. That ambergris is up stump, but I'll bet you that those who took it will see the inside of the State's prison before I get through with them."

CHAPTER XVI.

FREE ONCE MORE.

“**T**HERE! we re free. I told my wife I wouldn’t stay in this jail any longer than I had a mind to. Now let’s make a bee-line for home.”

Russell spoke thus in a low tone to Perkins, who preceded him, just after he had released his hold on a window-sill of the prison and dropped lightly to the ground. How had they managed it? That can be easily explained.

The jail, built on the usual New York plan, had its cells in the interior of the house; that is, a person could not go in or out of his room without passing within view of anyone who stood at the grated door and looked down the hall. During the daytime the prisoners were allowed in the hall, where there was an abundance of chairs to sit on; but when night came all were ordered into their cells

and locked up; then they were supposed to be safe. But this jail had been built for a long time, and everything was out of order. The gratings and screws were loose, and with an ordinary jack-knife to assist him a man could easily secure his freedom. It did not make much difference to men who were imprisoned for slight offences, for they would not take the trouble to escape; but to persons who had the prospect of spending five to ten years in the State's prison it was a different matter altogether. The only trouble was to get out of their cells.

Russell examined the lock of his cell door, the frame of which was made of wood, enclosing an iron grating with spaces large enough for him to get his hand through. He saw that by using his stout jack-knife he could remove the screws which secured the lock, and once in the hall his escape was assured.

"I won't stay in this jail any longer than I have a mind to," thought Russell, going to the window and examining the bars there. "But what'll I do when I get out? That's what's bothering me. I guess I'll go home, dig up

that ambergris, put it into my boat, and take it off somewhere and sell it. I wish I had somebody to depend on besides Perkins. He always was a Soft Tommy, and since we've been arrested I've been shaking in my shoes for fear he'd tell the sheriff where we hid the stuff. I tell you, if it comes to that——"

When Russell got to this point in his meditations it almost set him wild. He paced up and down the floor, thinking what he would do to Perkins in case he forgot himself in that way; and while he was thus engaged it grew dark, and the jailer came in to light the single lamp that threw its dim rays along the hall. Having made up his mind to escape, Russell unbent from his dignity and scraped acquaintanceship with the culprits confined there. He found they were in for very trivial misdeeds, such as chicken stealing and assault and battery, and, furthermore, that they lacked but a few days of being released.

"There's no chance of getting one of them to help me," mused Russell. "If I only had a few days to serve I wouldn't make a move, either; but to think of spending five or ten

years in the State's prison!—that is most too much for me.”

While he was thus meditating, the door opened, and who should come in but Perkins. His face was lit up with smiles, and he seemed overjoyed to find himself with Russell once more.

“I told Wright I couldn't bear to pass the night alone up stairs, so he sent me down here,” said Perkins.

Russell drew off to one side and Perkins followed him. He had an idea that the poacher wanted to say something to him.

“Look here,” growled Russell, in no very amiable tone of voice; “what was it you told Wright about me?”

“Not a thing,” declared Perkins. “He knows we have the ambergris, and that's all he does know.”

“You're sure you didn't tell him where we hid it?” asked Russell.

“Not a thing! I tell you plainly that Wright doesn't know what we did with that barrelful of stuff.”

“Then it's all right. Say! I'm going to

get out of here to-night. Come here, and I'll show you."

"Talk enough!" exclaimed Perkins, who was delighted with the thought. "But there's one thing I want to ask you—what'll we do after we get out?"

"That's one thing I haven't been able to decide. We'll talk about that as we go home."

The fact that a lamp was burning, and that the other prisoners could see what Russell was doing, made no sort of difference to them; they did not believe that those who were confined there would tell Mr. Nixon they were laying plans to escape. Indeed, the prisoner who had been accused of chicken stealing, and who saw Russell testing the bars on the outside of the window, came over and volunteered some information.

"Do you want to go away to-night?" he asked. "If you can get out of your cells you can leave this jail behind you and not half try. See there!" he added, taking hold of one of the grated slats and pushing it away from the window; "the screws that ought to hold it fast to the window-sill are all loose;

either one of you can get through the opening I have made here."

"Don't lisp a word of what we're doing," said Russell, suspiciously.

"It's mighty clear of my saying anything about it," replied the prisoner, with a laugh. "When the jailer comes in the morning and wants to know where you are I'll tell him I don't know. You surely won't go home again, for the sheriff will arrest you there as easily as he did before."

"I don't say where we're going," said Russell, but "we'll get away from him—you can bet on that."

"What have you two fellows been up to, anyway?" asked the prisoner, anxious to learn a little of their private history; "you must have something besides this jail before you."

"That's neither here nor there," answered Russell, in a severe tone. "We're accused of something we didn't do, and we're not going to stay here."

"Of course I didn't mean any insult, but we always like to know what our comrades

were arrested for. You haven't been committing murder, have you?"

"No!" exclaimed Russell, emphatically; "they say we've stolen property worth two thousand dollars."

"Whew!" whistled the prisoner. "Did you break a lock to get it? That's a State's prison offence, and I don't wonder you want to get away. If I don't see you again, good luck to you."

"That fellow has more cheek than any chap I ever saw!" declared Russell, when the prisoner rejoined his companions. "He might have seen that I didn't care to talk about what we were arrested for. Now, let's try the screws of the lock on your cell door."

Five minutes' time settled that matter. Those screws were equally loose, and after laying their plans for escape they sat down with the other prisoners and whiled away the time until nine o'clock. At that hour Mr. Nixon made his appearance at the hall door.

"Well, boys, I shall have to bid you good-night," said he, as he unlocked the door and

went in. "I suppose it's kinder early for some of you fellows, but it can't be helped."

The prisoners at once arose and filed into their cells, and Mr. Nixon locked them in; then he extinguished the light and went out, locking the hall door behind him. For an hour or two Russell heard him moving about the office, but finally quiet reigned—the jailer had gone to bed. He always slept in the office, so that he would be on hand to receive whatever new prisoners might be brought in.

Then Russell bestired himself. He thrust his hand through the grating above the lock, set his muscles to work, and presently the screws holding the lock fast to the door came out; then it was no trouble for him to open the door and go out into the hall. Perkins had been equally busy; and while Russell was placing the lock back, and putting the screws just as he found them, he came out and tried to see what Russell was doing.

"What are you up to?" he inquired, for it was so dark he could hardly see his hand before him.

"I'm putting the lock back," was the re-

ply. "Put yours back, too, and then it'll bother Nixon to find out how we escaped."

"Good luck to you, boys!" whispered a voice from one of the cells. "Don't go back home, for if you do you'll be sure to be caught."

Russell found that the prisoners had heard him and were giving him a "good send off." He thought it worth while to bear the caution in mind, but he was too busy to reply. Leading the way to the nearest window, he seized the loose iron slat that had been pointed out to him by another prisoner, and by pressing it outward with all his strength he made an opening sufficient for Perkins to crawl through, who, in turn, held it for Russell, and they were free.

"Now we must decide what we are going to do next," said Russell, after he and Perkins had climbed several fences and made their way to the road. "We are shut off from our old haunts. We must go away somewhere, settle down, and make new homes."

"Yes; and while we are doing it we'll be constantly harassed by the thought that what

we have done will soon become known. We don't give up the ambergris, do we?"

"By no means," said Russell, with all the earnestness he could throw into his words. "We have rendered ourselves liable to five years in the State's prison for that, and before I'll give it up I'll bury it deep in the ground, and let it stay there until it spoils."

If the truth must be told, Perkins did not fully agree with his friend Russell on that point. The very thought of a long term in the State's prison was repugnant to him. He had not viewed it in that light until Mr. Wright led him to see what burglary was. He never stopped to think of what was going to happen after he stole the ambergris. He went into it because Russell did, and now that he was fairly in, he found there was a settlement to come after it. And this brought up another thing: he believed that if he could watch his chance, steal the ambergris from Russell, take it back, and deliver it to Frank, he might get off scot free, or, at any rate, his sentence would be comparatively light.

"That's worth thinking of," soliloquized

Perkins, as he trudged along beside Russell after they had struck the road that led them to their homes. "If he wants to bury that stuff until it spoils, and go to prison on account of it, he must do it without me—I won't have any hand in it; but how I am to get out of it I don't know."

And Russell himself was not as happy as he pretended to be. There was a mortgage of some hundreds of dollars coming to him, and who could he get to collect it? Frank had told him that the money was waiting and that he would not pay any more interest on it, and now what was to be done? Taken altogether, his affairs were pretty badly mixed.

"Are you going to dig up that ambergris the first thing you do?" asked Perkins.

"I think we had better let it go until night comes, and perhaps by that time we can decide upon something," answered Russell. "We'll go into the woods near our house, and after the sheriff comes and goes away—he'll be apt to come the first thing in the morning—we'll come out. In that case the women will say they haven't seen us, and that'll be the truth."

This was the programme that was finally agreed upon, although Perkins could not see the need of it, and when they came to a place within plain view of Russell's house they laid down and went to sleep. They slept late the next morning, and Perkins was at last aroused by a violent shaking from his companion.

"What did I tell you?" he whispered. "Wright is at the house now!"

Perkins raised himself on his elbow and discovered the sheriff's buggy standing in front of the gate. Mr. Wright was in the house, where he remained but a few minutes, and then, coming out, drove towards Perkins's domicile.

"He'll be back in a little while," remarked Russell. "He has found out that my wife don't know anything about it, and now he's going down to see if he can get some information from your woman. You thought I was mighty particular because I didn't want the women to know we had stolen the ambergris. You see I was right."

The escaped prisoners remained in their place of concealment until the sheriff had gone

down to Perkins's house and stopped at Frank Ingram's, and then they mustered up courage enough to venture out. Perkins went at once to his own home, while Russell mounted the back steps of his house and entered the room where his wife was sitting.

"This is the second time I've been frightened this morning!" she exclaimed, starting to her feet. "How in the world did you get out of jail?"

"I just came out," said her husband, indifferently. "Have you anything to eat?"

This was all that passed between the poacher and his wife. She did not get up and cry over him, as most women would have done, but accepted the answer he gave her without question. She went to the door, looked up and down the road to make sure there was nobody coming, and then proceeded to set before him the remnants of her breakfast. As his jaws were put in motion his tongue also became loosened, and he began to give his wife a history of his escape.

"It wasn't anything to be proud of," said Russell, in conclusion. "Those fellows in

there could have gone as well as not, but they only had a few more days to stay until their time was out. Now, Nellie, I must go away from here. I have rendered myself liable to five years' imprisonment for stealing that stuff."

"Why, did you commit burglary?" asked his wife.

"Mr. Wright says I did, and so does one of the men confined in the jail. I pulled the fastenings off the door in order to get the plunder out."

"Well, that beats me!" said his wife, looking around for a place to sit down. "You ought to have been in better business. Where are you going?"

"Ask me something hard. I don't know, and Perkins never suggested a thing. If I could take the ambergris back to Frank, put it on the porch, knock on the door, and then light out, that would be a good way to get shut of the matter,—wouldn't it?"

"How much is the stuff worth?" asked Mrs. Russell. She knew, without asking, what Russell had been up to during his last

night at home, and she did not think it necessary to question him. She knew he was away from her sight, and if he was not poaching he was doing something else that was contrary to law.

"It's worth money," replied Russell, "and that's what gets ahead of me. More than that, Frank has the money to pay me for the mortgage."

"Where in the world did he get it?" inquired Mrs. Russell, who was really surprised now.

"You know as much about it as I do; I'm all in the dark," answered Russell, with a long-drawn sigh. "Nellie, if you don't think of some way out of this scrape I shall lose two thousand three hundred and fifty dollars—the two thousand I'll get for the ambergris and the three hundred and fifty dollars that is due on that mortgage."

Mrs. Russell fairly gasped for breath. The sum her husband had mentioned was a very large sum, in her eyes.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FIGHT AND ITS RESULT.

“THAT is an amount of money worth saving,” said Mrs. Russell, after she had taken a few moments in which to turn the matter over in her mind. “Take that stuff, whatever you call it, go to New York, and sell it. If you start right away, Frank won’t have time to inform the police there of his loss.”

“Then you wouldn’t give up the ambergris?” asked Russell.

“By no manner of means, I wouldn’t,” replied Mrs. Russell, getting up and going to the door again. “Those Ingrams are too much stuck up; and just think how big they would feel if they had two thousand dollars in their pockets! They wouldn’t even speak to you.”

“I don’t know but you’re right,” remarked Russell, looking down at the floor, “and I think I’d better dispose of it to-day.”

"Certainly—then it will be off your mind. Have you got it buried in the ground?"

"That's what I did with it."

"What is it that makes it so valuable?"

"It's something that comes out of a whale. I've had my eyes open ever since I've been fishing, but not a thing like that could I discover, and here Frank has gone and pitched onto it the first thing."

"Well, you might have been in better business than burying that stuff," said his wife again. "If you had been smart, you would have set out for New York that very night. You see what you get by keeping things from me."

"I'll have to wait until Perkins comes back," said Russell, going to the door and peeping out cautiously. "I'll get my spades handy."

"Don't wait for anybody," returned his wife, who was anxious to see him off; "you had better take my advice, for once. Your boat is ready, and you can put the stuff in it and cover it up with a tarpaulin. You ought to be back by to-morrow night."

"Then I guess I'll go down after Perkins. I wish he had a little more get-up-and-get about him; he leaves everything to me. But look here, Nellie—when I come back shall I keep on living here? I tell you, breaking a lock on purpose to get into a man's house isn't just the thing."

"Nobody saw you doing it."

"Well, there's something in that—he can't prove it on me."

Russell was on the point of going out into his woodshed to see if his spades were where he had left them, when an idea occurred to him and he turned back.

"There's something else I meant to have told you of," he added. "You know that Pet Wheelock has been in the habit of keeping some of his pension-money back; he didn't give it all to Mr. Barry. Well, somebody went there yesterday, while he was out fishing, and stole the last penny of it."

Mrs. Russell had been so many times surprised that morning that she did not say anything. She could only look vacantly at her husband and wait for him to explain himself.

“They must have got a good lot of it, too, for Pet has been keeping that money back for a year or more. The worst part of it was that he followed the wheel-tracks and recovered his money.”

“The wheel-tracks? There are only two persons around here who ride wheels.”

“I know it, and they are the very ones who visited Pet’s cabin while he was out fishing. Wright told them about it in my presence, and I tell you they were in a hurry to get away. What’ll be done with those boys I don’t know.”

Russell kept on to the woodshed, and, having found his spades, took them on his shoulder and directed his steps toward the woods—not neglecting, however, to cast his eyes up and down the road, to satisfy himself that no one was in sight.

“Things seem to be all right so far,” he reflected, when he came to a halt beside a pile of brush that some woodcutters had placed there. “If anybody would throw aside that brush-heap and dig down two feet he would find the stuff that’s been bothering me ever

since that boy brought it in from the ocean ; it's there yet, for nothing has been disturbed."

It was no wonder that Russell should have thought of finding a new hiding-place for his ambergris, if he intended to keep it. It was the only spot in sight of his house in which the stuff could be concealed without somebody stumbling onto it—the only pile of brush there was for some distance around. He did not set the spades up against the brush, for some one might happen along while he was gone, but hid them in a corner of the fence, out of sight, and then continued on his way toward Perkins's house. He was too sharp to go into the house where Perkins was, but concealed himself in a thicket of bushes and gave a peculiar whistle, which soon brought Perkins to the door.

"All safe in there?" asked Russell.

"All safe," said Perkins ; "nobody here."

This was all Russell desired to know, and with a few steps he was at Perkins's side.

"My wife says the best thing we can do with that ambergris is to take it to New York and sell it," said Russell.

"That's what my wife says, too," answered Perkins; "they don't believe in keeping it any longer."

"Just think!" exclaimed Mrs. Perkins. "Those Ingrams, because they live in a better house than ours, are so proud that they won't speak to anybody; and imagine what they'll do if they get two thousand dollars in their pockets! You want to get that stuff off just as soon as you can; don't wait one minute!"

"I've got two spades down there, all handy, to dig it up with, and the sooner we get about it the sooner we'll have it done. The tide is in now, and we'll have but a short distance to carry it to the boat. If anyone should meet us, we'll tell him we have the barrel loaded with fish."

"Then go about it at once!" exclaimed the woman, who seemed as anxious as the men to have the ambergris removed to a safe place. "I'll expect you home to-morrow, and I'll want five dollars, to get me a new dress."

Mrs. Perkins even got hold of her husband's arm, and fairly shoved him out of the

door while she was talking to him; and thus encouraged, the men started for the woods.

“Now, remember—I don’t want to know where that stuff is, nor anything about it,” said Mrs. Perkins, as they moved away; “you have it hid in the bushes, and that’s all I know about it.”

Something—we don’t know what it was—made the men extremely cautious while approaching the spot where the ambergris was hidden. Not a word did they exchange with each other. They moved slowly along the edge of the timber without causing a twig to rustle, and in a few minutes were within sight of the pile of brush beneath which their plunder was concealed. Then they stopped, gazed before them with eyes that seemed ready to start from their sockets, and turned and looked at each other. Frank Ingram was sitting on the pile of brush which hid his treasure from view!

As may be supposed, Frank was not long in making up his mind that Mr. Wright’s suggestion ought to be lived up to, and no sooner had the latter disappeared down the

road in the direction of the village than Frank began to make preparations to watch Russell's house day and night, and, if possible, find out what he had done with the ambergris. So he went into the house, saying to his mother, as he put on his coat,

"It's no go. Mr. Wright has tried his best to pump those fellows, and cannot make anything out of them. He told me that the best thing I can do is to watch Russell's house, and find out, if I can, where the ambergris is hidden. Russell and Perkins escaped from the jail last night, and of course the first thing they'll do will be to come home. I believe I'll go out there now."

"Frank, you want to be careful of yourself," said Mrs. Ingram, anxiously; "that poacher is a dangerous man."

"I know it; but they won't catch me napping. Good-by until I see you again."

Russell had not been gone after Perkins more than five minutes before Frank came up, and, seating himself on the very pile of brush that covered his ambergris, settled himself down to watch for Russell. He could easily

see the back door of the poacher's house without himself being seen, and twice, while he sat there, he saw Mrs. Russell come out of that door and carry in an armful of wood. His senses were all alert, too, and he would have been surprised indeed if anyone had told him that the two men he wanted most to see had come up to within twenty feet of him; but that it was so, Frank speedily found out.

"Don't that beat you?" whispered Russell, nudging Perkins with his elbow.

"I should say so!" was the reply; "he is nearer that ambergris than he ever will be again."

"Now, what's to be do done?" continued Russell, taking off his hat and scratching his head. "He must get away from there, or we can't get the stuff."

"All he has to do is just to throw away the pile of brush, and he'll find the barrel," said Perkins.

"Yes, but we don't want him to throw it away. Wright has warned him, and he is watching, to see that we don't get the ambergris away. Suggest something, Perkins.

What do you say if we go up to him and capture him?"

"What'll we do with him?"

"We'll tie him hand and foot and leave him out there in the bushes; then we'll go to work, dig up the ambergris, take it to my boat, and carry it to New York."

"I don't much like the idea of tackling him," remarked Perkins, doubtfully; "they say he's an awful hard hitter."

"Well, I guess two men are enough for him," answered Russell, scornfully. "While he is busy with one, the other can take him by the throat and throw him on his back."

"Come on!" said Perkins, hastily pushing back his sleeves.

"Whatever you do, don't give him a chance to holler!" whispered Russell; "he would rouse all the neighbors for a mile around. Have you anything to tie him with?"

Perkins had not thought of that. There was not a piece of rope nearer than his house; perhaps he had better go back home and get some.

"Well, go ahead, and I'll stay here and

watch him. Go as quick as you can, and without making any noise."

Perkins crept away stealthily, and while he was gone Russell lay there in his concealment, keeping a sharp eye on Frank and all his movements. The boy was sitting with his elbows on his knees, his chin resting on his hands; but now and then, tiring of remaining in that position, he got up and walked around, though he was very cautious in all his movements, and took care to keep out of sight of any persons there might be in Russell's house. Finally Perkins came back with several pieces of rope in his hand, one of which he gave to Russell, and the rest he kept.

"Now we're all ready," said Perkins.

"As soon as we get him tied we must gag him," replied Russell; "that will keep him quiet until we can dig up the ambergris."

"Fix it to suit yourself; I'll keep watch of him while you make the gag. Come on, now."

One would think it was Perkins who suggested the idea of making a prisoner of

Frank, for he was the first to take the lead. As he spoke he jumped up and walked rapidly toward Frank, who, surprised as he was to see the men, got down off the pile of brush and calmly awaited their coming. When they were within a few feet of him he waved his hand for them to stop.

“ You’re just the men I want to see !” said he, and the ropes showed him what they wanted to do with him. “ Where is that barrel you stole out of my cellar ?”

“ What barrel ?” asked Russell, walking ahead, in order to get within reach of Frank.

“ You have come near enough !” warned Frank ; “ I want you to stand where you are. You stole a barrelful of ambergris out of my cellar a night or two ago——”

Frank did not have time to finish saying what he intended, for just then Russell made a rush, intending to seize Frank by the throat ; but he did not succeed. The boy stepped back and met him with a square left-hander that made him turn about on his heel and brought him with violence to the ground. Russell, who had said that Frank would alarm the

neighborhood for a mile around if he was once permitted to raise his voice, had given no thought to himself when he said it, for the yell he uttered must have been heard at Perkins's house, if his wife was listening, and when he was stretched out on the ground he did not immediately get up. Frank turned like a flash and sent a right-hander at Perkins, who dodged it, and in a second more had Frank around the legs.

"Now, my hearty, I guess you'll give up," said the man, as he bore Frank to the earth. "Come on, Russell; where's your rope?"

The poacher got up at once. He thought the fight was all over when he went down, but these words of encouragement from Perkins put new life into him. It was anything but fun, however, to bind Frank, even if he was down. In an instant he had hooked his arm around Perkins's neck, and after a brief but terrific struggle the two changed places, and Frank was now on top.

"Come on with your rope, Russell!" sputtered Perkins. "I swan to man! Are you

going to let him lick me right here, and you doing nothing to help? Tie his hands!"

That was easier said than done, for Frank acted as though he had half a dozen hands; but Russell managed to get hold of him in such a way that Perkins could arise; after that the two men handled Frank very easily. Before he could think twice his arms and feet were securely bound, and he was helpless on the ground.

"I ought to give you two or three good ones to pay you for the lick you gave me," said Russell, rubbing the spot on his cheek where Frank's blow had landed.

"You have no time to waste in such matters as that," remarked Perkins. "Go and get a gag, and I'll watch him till you come back."

"If I had hit you when I struck at you I would have won the fight," said Frank to Perkins, wondering at his adroitness in dodging the blow.

"Yes, but you see you didn't do it," replied Perkins with a laugh. "Two men are better than one. Now, you keep still—I don't want to talk to you any more."



"I ought to give you two or three good ones," said Russell.

Frank watched Russell as he came out of the bushes with a stick in his hand, which he was preparing as a gag. As soon as two notches were cut in the stick and a piece of twine was made fast in each notch, he asked Frank if he would submit to the gag, or whether they would have to choke him to get his mouth open.

"I'll take it," answered Frank, who knew that the men would be only too glad to be rough with him. "You don't need to choke me; I'll open my mouth."

Frank wondered what his captors were going to do with him, and it was not very long before he found out. As soon as the gag had been placed to suit, Russell caught him by his feet, while Perkins took him by the shoulders, and they carried him a short distance into the bushes and laid him on the ground; then they prepared to take their leave.

"Now, be certain that you don't make any attempt to get away before dark," said Russell, shaking his fist at Frank; "if you do, I'll be here after you, and you can't handle

yourself as you could a little while ago. I'll see that my woman turns you loose."

After examining the bonds and gag, to satisfy themselves that Frank had no chance of getting away from them, they left him to himself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OFF FOR NEW YORK.

WHAT Frank Ingram's feelings were when he was left alone to his meditations, and saw the bushes swing back and forth as the men worked their way through them, may be imagined, but we cannot describe them. He knew he was near the hiding-place of the stolen property, otherwise Russell and Perkins would not have made a prisoner of him, and he listened in the hope of finding out where that place of concealment was. In a few minutes he heard a rattling of brushwood, and it continued so long that the conviction forced itself on his mind that he was nearer the ambergris than he had ever been since he took it out of the water.

"I declare, I was right over it!" thought he, with a feeling of bitterness in his heart that prompted him to exert all his strength to break his bonds. "It's under that pile of

brush on which I was sitting! Now, what are the men going to do with it? Oh! I must get free and tell Mr. Wright of this."

Frank redoubled his efforts, but beyond being able to move his feet slightly he found he had been tied to stay until Mrs. Russell would come and release him. Presently he heard something that caused him to lie still and listen again; it was as if men were at work digging up the plunder. The sound of spades striking a barrel—how well he knew the sound!—came to his ears; then footsteps, which grew fainter and fainter every moment. In a few minutes he heard somebody coming through the bushes toward him. It was Russell, who wanted to see if Frank was still securely bound.

"Ah!—you are there yet, are you?" he asked with a smile. "I didn't know but you might have found means to get loose. Now, you just possess your soul in patience, and Mrs. Russell will be down here after awhile."

Frank longed to reply, but the gag in his mouth kept him silent. The poacher turned him over, examined his bonds, and then started

for the house, leaving the boy once more alone. He climbed the fence and went through the back door into the presence of his wife, who started back in alarm when she saw his face.

"Russell, what's the matter with you?" she asked, as soon as she could speak. "You've been fighting with somebody!"

"Well, I should say I had!" replied the poacher; "didn't you hear me yell? Look at my face!"

"I see your face. Who gave you that black eye?"

"That snipe, Frank Ingram," answered Russell, in disgust. "We found him sitting over the place where we had left the ambergris, and of course we had to tie him in order to dig it up. He's out there in the bushes now, and I want you to go down about four o'clock and turn him loose."

"Well, you just wait until I go!" exclaimed the woman, who was astonished by this proposition.

"If you don't release him, how is he going to get loose?" demanded Russell. "I told him you would be down there."

"You had no business to tell him anything of the kind! Do you want to get me mixed up in your thieving expeditions? It looks that way, now; but I don't know anything about them. Where is the barrel you stole from him?"

"Perkins has it, and he's on his way to the boat with it," replied Russell. "But I tell you, Nellie, somebody must turn that fellow loose. If you don't do it, he can starve there."

"Then let him starve, and welcome; I sha'n't go near him, and you can just bet on that. Will you be home to-night?"

"I don't know as I'll ever come home," growled Russell, angry at his wife for refusing to release the prisoner. "If I get a thousand dollars of this money, I can support myself anywhere."

"Go your own gait," said his wife, evidently not at all alarmed by this threat; "you have some money in the house, and I can support myself on that. But I'll see you at home by to-morrow night."

"Now, Nellie, won't you go and release that fellow?" asked Russell in a whining tone.

"No, I won't, and that's all there is about it. You were in big business, letting that little boy lick you!" sneered the woman, for just then Russell turned his head, thus enabling her to obtain a better view of his cheek; "you are big enough to manage him alone."

"He made a hard fight of it!" exclaimed the poacher, "and it was all we could do to handle him. I guess I'll take a little of this money; we might want something to eat in New York."

"Don't you let those fellows get the bulge on you and steal the stuff!" cautioned Mrs. Russell; "you'll find a heap of swindlers there."

Russell made no reply. He went to the bed, drew a trunk from beneath it, and took from it a stocking which contained a goodly amount of money, judging by the way he handled it. He took five dollars out of it, pushed the trunk back, visited the woodshed, where he remained long enough to obtain a tarpaulin with which to cover the barrel of ambergris, and then went off without taking any further leave of his wife.

"The old woman thought she would scare me when she said she wouldn't turn the prisoner loose," said Russell, as he climbed the fence and made his way toward the place where he had left his boat, "but she didn't scare me one particle. When four o'clock comes that fellow will be free, and then the old woman will have to depend on herself for lying out of it. Now, I wonder if Perkins has taken that barrel down without being seen by anybody?"

We must stop here long enough to relate how Frank got loose from his bonds and what he did afterward, for it so happened that he went to Mrs. Russell, instead of waiting for Mrs. Russell to come to him.

As soon as Russell had examined the boy's fastenings and gone away, Frank set to work in earnest to release himself. Perkins had tied his arms securely; but he could move his feet a little, and he kept twisting and wriggling them until finally he got one foot loose. It was a matter of some difficulty for him, however, to get upon his feet, for he lay in such a way that the bushes hindered him, in

place of assisting him ; but he managed to gain an upright position at last, and then he followed the trail that Russell had made. Presently he came to the spot whereon the brush had been piled on which he had been sitting all the morning, but which had now disappeared, and in its stead was an excavation which was just about deep enough to hold his barrel of ambergris. If he had only known it when he first came there his troubles would have been nearly over. He tried to give vent to his feelings in an angry expression, but the gag stopped him.

“I’m going to see that old woman, at any rate,” he thought, making an effort to climb the fence. “If she won’t remove this gag I’ll go out on the road, and I’ll surely meet somebody there who will.”

After many efforts, and with difficulty steady-ing himself to keep from falling, Frank finally found himself in Russell’s lot, and without any ceremony presented himself at the back door. It happened that Mrs. Russell was thinking about him ; and when she heard his footsteps on the stairs and turned to find him

at her side, with the gag between his teeth and his hands confined behind him, she was not in any way surprised. She stood and looked at him before she did anything.

"B-r-r-r!" murmured Frank, going up close to her and turning his head so that she could see the knot that held the gag in its place.

"You want that stick out of your mouth, do you?" inquired the woman. "There you are. The next time, attend to your own business."

"Thank you!" said Frank, who drew a long breath of relief when the gag was removed. "That was one good thing you did, if you never do another in all your life. Now, please unloose my hands."

Mrs. Russell had no little difficulty in complying with this request, for Perkins had not been at all particular about tying the knots; but she succeeded at last, and then Frank stretched his arms and went to a water-bucket, standing near by, for a drink.

"You wasn't to get away until four o'clock," said Mrs. Russell, thinking she ought to say something.

"So Russell told me; but I had a notion to get away sooner," answered Frank. "Where's Russell now?" he added, though he did not expect a truthful answer to his question.

"I don't know where he is," replied Mrs. Russell; "he's gone out somewhere."

"He has taken my ambergris and gone off to sell it!" retorted Frank, "but I don't think he'll succeed; there's a telegraph wire between here and New York."

"My man hasn't anything to do with the telegraph wire!" declared the woman, and Frank thought he saw her change color.

"No!—but Mr. Wright has. He has had time to notify the police, and I'll bet that Russell can't land the ambergris in New York without some fellow who has a star on his coat asking him what he has there. Good-by, Mrs. Russell; I thank you for untying my hands and taking that gag out of my mouth."

"I wasn't certain that the thieves were going to New York, but I believe it now," thought Frank, as he hastened his walk toward home. "I think I'll wait and see what that woman is going to do."

As soon as a bend in the road hid him from Russell's home, Frank stationed himself behind a clump of bushes from where he could see anybody who came from the house, and hardly had he taken his position there when he saw Mrs. Russell come hastily from the back door and set out at a rapid walk for the beach. There was somebody there she wanted to see—that was evident. As soon as she was out of sight in the woods, Frank left his point of observation and followed her. He took care not to be seen by the woman he was trailing, and on reaching the beach he saw that Russell and his companion were in their boat and far out of reach of any hail that might be sent after them. The woman waved her apron above her head, and tried in various ways to attract their attention, but was finally compelled to give it up in disgust.

“So far, so good!” exclaimed Frank, as he turned about and started for home. “Russell is bound for New York, and if the police there are what they are cracked up to be, that ambergris will soon be mine again. Now I’ll go down and interview Mr. Wright.”

When he reached home, Frank had a thrilling story to tell his mother, and she listened with a heart that was full of apprehension. She knew, as well as Frank did, that he was closer to discovering the hiding-place of his ambergris than he would be again, and that was what filled her with dismay. If Russell succeeded in reaching New York before the police there had been informed of what he had done, Frank's prospects of finding his stolen treasure were very slim indeed.

"I know he is going to New York, because I saw him on the way there," said Frank, going upstairs to change his clothing. "He won't reach there before night, and Mr. Wright will have plenty of time to warn the police."

Frank was not long in changing his apparel, and when he came down he was ready to call upon the sheriff. Hastily bidding his mother good-by he set out, and when Mrs. Ingram had seen him safely out of the gate she sat down and had a good, hearty cry. Frank went onto the main street of the village, and

there, perched on his drygoods box, nursing his leg and nodding to the people who went by, he discovered Mr. Wright.

“Halloo! Frank,” exclaimed the sheriff, falling into his old way of greeting everybody who spoke to him—“what is the news out your way?”

“There’s news enough,” said Frank, picking out a place to sit down. “Russell has the ambergris, and is now on his way to New York with it.”

“Think so?” asked the sheriff.

“Yes, sir; and I’ll tell you how I found it out.”

Frank then went on and told his story just as we have tried to tell it, and during the recital he noticed, as before, that the sheriff paid but little attention to him; he was more interested in his cigar than in anything else.

“And when his wife went out to hail him and tell him that the police would be warned of his arrival in New York, she couldn’t get any sign out of him that he heard her at all,” said Frank, in conclusion. “Now, Mr. Wright, what are you going to do about it?”

"Nothing," he answered.

"Nothing! I tell you, Mr. Wright, you are not troubled half as much about that ambergris as I am. Don't you want to capture the men at all?"

"Why, of course I do!" declared Mr. Wright; "I am as deeply concerned in their capture as you are. The police have been warned."

"In New York?" asked Frank.

"Yes; and in Boston, too. What do you think I have been doing since I came back here? You carried out my orders to the letter, and learned something by it, and I have been working to suit myself."

"Mr. Wright, I beg your pardon," said Frank; "you acted so indifferently that I thought you didn't care whether I got my ambergris or not."

"You see," continued the sheriff, placing one hand on Frank's shoulder and speaking in a confidential tone, "I knew they wouldn't keep it any longer than they could help, and that's why I let them get out of jail last night."

"What had you to do with letting them go?" asked Frank, considerably astonished.

"I simply kept away from them; I could have arrested them both this morning, if I had felt like it."

"Where were they?"

"Back of Russell's house, in the woods. When I came away, they came out."

"And you knew they were going to New York with that ambergris?"

"Well, it kinder ran in my mind that that was what they were going to do, and so I warned the authorities. They can't land that stuff of yours in New York—the harbor police will catch them; and when I receive notice that they have been arrested I will drive out after you, and we will go down and see about it."

Frank was full of expressions of gratitude, and made up his mind then and there that he never would doubt Mr. Wright again. Whenever he tried to tell how thankful he was, Mr. Wright patted him on the back and said, "That's all right; I know you didn't mean what you said;" and the boy departed, carry-

ing a much lighter heart than he had brought into the village with him.

Russell and Perkins, in the meanwhile, propelled by a favorable breeze, had got outside of the bar and were shaping their course for New York. They did not see the apron that Mrs. Russell waved over her head to attract their attention, for they were too busy discussing plans of their own. It was a great worry to Russell to know what they were going to do when they got back, after they had safe in their pockets the money that the ambergris brought.

"I don't see how we are going to live on the Island," said he. "We have the law down on us, and I have half a mind to take my share of the money and go somewhere else. If we can get into the harbor before the police are warned, well and good; it all depends on that."

Perkins did not know what to say. He sat amidships, with his arms resting on the gunwale behind him, and gazed out over the water, completely at his wit's end. There was one thing he kept saying to himself all the

while: "I wish Frank had his ambergris back again."

"Suggest something, Perkins," said Russell, at length.

"I don't know what I have to suggest, except it be that we take the ambergris back to Frank," replied Perkins.

"That won't do at all!" exclaimed Russell, who grew mad every time this suggestion was made to him. "I would rather go to the State's prison for a year than have my wife call me a coward with every other word she says. We'll sell the ambergris, if we can, and decide upon the other thing afterward."

This remark always settled the matter so far as Russell was concerned; and it must be added that it closed the mouth of Perkins, too. He had nothing further to say on the subject, but began commenting on the different vessels that passed by them. He would go ahead with Russell, and trust to luck.

CHAPTER XIX.

ROBINSON, THE DETECTIVE.

WE have said that Perkins had decided to go with Russell and trust to luck ; but after thinking the matter over he concluded he would not do that. With Russell, he had been in the toils of the law several times, both on account of their poaching and other misdeeds, and Russell had always succeeded in working his way clear ; but somehow or other this seemed rather out of the usual line. He did not see any way of avoiding without imprisonment the scrape into which he had got, and that was something Perkins always thought of with horror. If he could steal the ambergris, take it to Frank, and throw himself on his generosity, he was sure he could escape with a very light penalty.

“ I guess that is the best thing I can do after all,” mused Perkins. “ Frank will be so glad to get his ambergris again that he won’t be

angry at anyone who brings it back to him, and I believe I'll watch my chance and try it. Russell has to go ashore and find some place to sell the plunder, and if I can induce him to leave me in charge, that's the last sight he'll ever have of it."

Having fully made up his mind to this, Perkins talked incessantly ; but with all his trying he could not get Russell to answer more than in monosyllables—he was busy thinking about what he was going to do after he had sold the ambergris.

"If I could live the last week over again, I tell you I would do differently," he kept saying to himself. "What do I care how much money Frank Ingram makes? He won't interfere with me, because I can make more by poaching than he ever saw. But I've got the ambergris, and I'm going to sell it, if I can."

Failing to draw Russell into conversation, Perkins finally relapsed into silence, and thought over his plans, and watched the vessels that were going in and out of the harbor. Darkness came on apace. It was eighty miles from the town in which they lived to the port

of New York, but Russell had sailed the course so often that he easily kept out of the way of any craft that might have run them down. Presently, when Fort Hamilton was passed and the tide was beginning to turn, he saw a little vessel which had come to anchor in a remote place, out of the way of all ships, and he held toward her with the intention of making fast to her until morning. The lookout of the vessel saw Perkins arise to his feet and gather the painter in his hand, and in a rough voice hailed him and desired to know what he was doing there.

"We want to tie up alongside of you until daylight comes," said Russell. "You have an anchor, and we haven't. The tide is turning, now, and we can't hold against it."

"What's your cargo?" asked the lookout.

"Fish—nothing but fish."

"You're smuggling, ain't you?"

"Honor bright, we ain't," answered Russell, as if he felt hurt by the question. "Our cargo is from Long Island, and we want to sell it here."

"Oh, I know you fellows!" said the look-

out, who caught the painter as it came up to him; "you have been out to sea, picking up some cigars that somebody on some steamer has thrown overboard. Well, I don't mind your getting a safe harbor here, but you must be out the first thing in the morning."

"We'll do that, cap'n; but we haven't been doing any smuggling."

A snug berth having been secured for that night at least, Russell and Perkins pulled down the sail and stretched themselves out beside the barrel as if they were going to sleep; but they were too busy with their own thoughts. They rolled and tossed on their hard bed until daylight came, and the only thing that reminded them that they were not alone in the world was the steady tramping of the lookout on the schooner's deck and the motion that was communicated to their boat by the waves of passing steamers that now and then moved up or down the bay. Toward morning they fell into a troubled slumber, from which they were aroused by the lookout, who hailed them and told them it was high time they were getting under way.

"I hope you'll have good luck with your cigars, boys," said he, while something like a grin overspread his face; "but you want to keep your wits about you—there are plenty of police on the docks."

The men made no reply, but hoisted their sail, cast off the painter, and stood on their way up the bay. It was now a matter of some difficulty to steer clear of all the vessels that were cruising up and down the harbor, but by keeping close to the shore, and by watching his opportunity to slip between them, Russell managed to avoid everything until he came opposite the Battery.

"I guess we'll tie up here," remarked Russell. "The first thing we know, some of those ships will run us down. You stay here and keep an eye on the barrel and I'll go ashore and see what I can do."

"How are you going to work it, any way?" asked Perkins. "You don't know any man who will buy the stuff."

"No; but I'll go into some store and ask to see one of those books that have in them the names of everybody in the city, and when

I come across the address of a manufacturing chemist, he's the man I'll go to."

Perkins did not quite like this arrangement, but he knew too much to say anything about it; he was very much afraid that Russell would change his plans. Frank had undoubtedly found his manufacturing chemist in the same way, and what if Russell should stumble onto the same man that Frank did? But then there was more than one man in a big city who made his living by manufacturing perfumery, and it was not to be supposed that Russell would call upon the same man. He assisted in lowering the sail and spreading it over the barrel, and then lightly leaped out and took his way along the Battery. He had to go quite a distance before finding a directory, and even then, when he asked the clerk for information, that person looked at him in surprise.

"There's a book of that kind, and I want to see it," said Russell. "It has the names of all the people in town, and the business they follow."

"You mean a directory, don't you?" in-

quired the clerk. "Well, we have a book of that kind, and I will show it to you."

"I want to find a manufacturing chemist," replied Russell.

"Oh, is that what you want? Then go up to Arland & Wakeman, No. —, Broadway; they are the men you want to see."

"Would you mind writing that down for me?" asked Russell; "I may forget the number, you know."

The clerk good-naturedly complied, and with the address in his hand, Russell came out and directed his course toward Broadway. After turning numerous corners and getting in the way of people who were hurrying to their work, he at last found himself in Broadway, and began looking at the numbers over the doors. Discovering the one he was in search of, he boldly entered the store, to be confronted by a gentleman with a pencil behind his ear.

"Is this the establishment of Arland & Wakeman, the manufacturing chemists?" inquired Russell.

"Yes, sir; what can I do for you?"

"I want to know if you buy such a thing as ambergris?"

"Well, I should say we did!" replied the clerk, beginning to show an interest at once.

"Have you got some?"

"Yes; I have almost a barreelful."

"Whew!—you're lucky. Where did you pick it up?"

"Off Long Island; I found it two or three days ago."

"What place do you hail from?"

"Middleport—about eighty or a hundred miles from here."

"What do think your ambergris worth?"

"About two thousand dollars; and I don't know but what I can get more for it."

"What is your name?"

"Russell—Jasper Russell. I am known to all the fishermen who sail out of that harbor."

The clerk did not say anything, but he kept up a furious thinking. Ambergris is something that is not for sale every day, and he wondered how this man could obtain a barreelful of it when there had been a boy in that very store, but a day or two before, who hailed

from the same place, and told much the same story as Russell did.

"You see, I am only a clerk here, and I have no authority to buy your ambergris," he remarked; "but if you will sit down and wait until Mr. Wakeman comes he will talk to you; he will surely give you more than anybody else. Here's a morning paper for you to while away your time with."

Russell accepted the paper, and the clerk went behind his desk and took up a card that bore somebody's address. There was the autograph, written in a school-boy's round hand, "Frank Ingram, Middleport, Long Island;" and after the clerk looked at it he turned and looked at Russell.

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you," he continued, "but are you a married man?"

"Yes, and have been for years."

"Have you any children?"

"No, nor anybody who has any claim on me," replied Russell. "I wonder what he wants to know that for?" said he to himself.

"Then it is as I feared," soliloquized the

clerk ; “that ambergris has been stolen, and you have come to the place where Frank Ingram sold it before. I guess I had better have a police officer here ; two thousand dollars is worth saving.”

The clerk came out from behind his desk and took his stand in the doorway. He had not been there a great while before a man in gray came up and entered into a low but earnest conversation with him. That individual seemed to comprehend the matter, for when the clerk went behind his desk again he came in and loitered around, examining the various articles on the shelves. Russell did not notice this ; if he had, he would have got out as soon as he could. He was kept waiting there for half an hour and then a carriage drove up to the door and a short, stout man stepped out.

“There comes Mr. Wakeman,” remarked the clerk ; “I will talk to him a few minutes, and then you can try your hand on him.”

Mr. Wakeman came into the store in a hurry, and seeing no one there but the man in gray, with whom he seemed to be ac-

quainted, he bowed to him, went around behind the desk, and took his stand beside the clerk. The two conversed for a little while, and then the junior partner came from the desk, rubbing his hands gleefully together, and approached Russell.

"So you are the man who has some ambergris for sale?" asked he. "Do you know where it is?"

"Of course I do," answered Russell; "I left it down at the Battery."

"You could not have left it much farther off and expect me to see it," said the portly man. "You will have to hire a dray to get it up here. What do you ask for it?"

Russell told him the price was two thousand dollars, and said he thought the ambergris would be very cheap at that.

"Your boy was in here the other day and sold it for two thousand dollars," replied Mr. Wakeman, looking sharply at the man. "I told him that if he had a barrel half full I would give him that much for it."

"My boy?" stammered Russell. "I have no boy."

"Why, his name was Frank Ingram, and he hails from the same port that you do. Now, you go down and get that ambergris, and I'll see what I can do for you."

"All right, sir," answered Russell, jumping to his feet; "I'll have it up here as soon as I can get a dray to fetch it."

The poacher vanished through the door faster than most men could have done, and the stout man turned and looked at the man in gray.

"Well, Robinson, what do you think of it?" he asked.

"That fellow has stolen the ambergris, and came to the city to sell it," replied the man in gray, "and, somehow, he has stumbled onto the very man that the boy called on when he was here."

"Do you think you had better watch him?"

"Of course I do," said Robinson, going to the door and looking out in the direction Russell had gone. "Just before I came up here the captain received a notice from headquarters that some ambergris had been stolen on Long Island, described the thieves so accurately

that I recognized this one in a minute, and told us that if the stuff was brought here we were to seize it and arrest the men."

"Then there are two of them," remarked Mr. Wakeman. "The other one is probably down at the Battery, watching the boat. Well, go on, and when he gets the ambergris up here you can arrest him."

Robinson acted very much as did Mr. Wright when he was employed on the case, when he took it much too easy to suit Frank. He paused to light a cigar, walked out of the door very deliberately, and followed along after Russell. He did not appear to see anything, although he noticed every stranger he met on the street. He kept about half a block behind the suspect, and saw every move he made.

Russell was in a fever of suspense, and it was all on account of his taking that first clerk's advice. He had no business to call upon Arland & Wakeman. Somebody must have recommended that firm to Frank, just as the clerk had recommended it to Russell, and here the poacher had gone right to it.

"I'll see how you'll come out ahead of me," he chuckled, as he increased his pace, anxious to put as wide a distance as he could between him and that firm. "I was certain, from the questions that clerk asked me, that somehow or other he had had his suspicions aroused, but I didn't know what it was. Now I know, and let's see them catch me—that's all. I'll get into my boat and go up to Albany but what I'll sell the ambergris."

The long distance that lay between Russell and the Battery was accomplished at last, and he began to look around for his boat; but he could not see anything that resembled her. He walked to the edge of the sea-wall and looked up and down as far as his eye could reach, but nothing in the shape of his craft was to be seen.

"Well, I swan to man!" exclaimed Russell.

"What's the matter?" asked a voice close to his elbow.

"My boat is gone!" declared the poacher, turning fiercely upon the man at his side.

"Your boat? Gone?" said the man in gray.

"Yes, it's gone; and if I ever catch the fellow who ran off with it I won't leave a grease-spot of him!"

"What was the man doing here? Was he to watch the boat while you were gone?"

"That's just what he was to do. I brought a cargo from Middleport, Long Island, worth two thousand dollars, and he has gone off with it."

"Do you see any boat on the bay that resembles it?"

"No, I don't; and if she was out there I couldn't see her, there are so many craft in the way."

"What did you have that was worth two thousand dollars?"

"Say—you want to know too much!" replied Russell. "You had better keep a straight tongue in your head or——" The poacher stopped and looked hard at the man who stood before him. "Ain't you the chap who was with me in that store up there?"

"What store?" asked the man, opening his eyes.

"Oh, yes, what store!" exclaimed Russell;

"you know well enough what I mean. Are you a detective?"

"Well, a sort of a one," answered Robinson, turning up the lapel of his vest and displaying the shield that was pinned fast to it. "I guess you had better come with me, hadn't you?"

"Say! How did you get wind of it?"

"Wright telegraphed to headquarters, and that's the way we learned of it."

"Well, I wish you would get my boat for me while you're about it."

"Oh, we will have her, and the man, too, sooner or later."

"Perkins is just as deep in the mud as I am. Don't take hold of my arm, to let folks know that I'm a prisoner, and I'll go with you peaceably."

Russell was in a fair way to go to the State's prison, at all events.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST OF FRANK'S FORTUNE.

LATE on the afternoon of that day Mr. Wright was sitting in his accustomed seat on the dry-goods box, nursing his left leg and busy with his own thoughts. He had many cases in which he was employed, and, if the truth must be told, he thought of Frank and his ambergris but once while he was revolving them in his mind. He admitted that it was a hard case—that things had come to a pretty pass when a boy who needed money as badly as Frank did could not go out and capture a prize on the sea without having somebody steal it—and then his mind went to those prisoners in the jail whose time had nearly expired. While thus engaged, a man came up and handed him an envelope. It contained a telegraphic dispatch, which the sheriff proceeded to read. His eyes glistened when he noted its contents, after which he folded it up,

put it into his pocket, and went on nursing his left leg, as before. The dispatch read as follows :

“ Jasper Russell, the man who was engaged in stealing in your neighborhood, has been found. He is now safe in the Tombs, but the ambergris is gone.”

“ Well, that is not so very clear, after all,” said the sheriff, slanting his cigar up to his right cheek and smoking furiously. “ This dispatch does not say anything about Perkins, so he must have gone away and took the ambergris with him. I guess the best thing I can do will be to go to New York and get that fellow. I wonder how they found him ?”

Mr. Wright got upon his feet, and slowly wended his way toward his barn to hitch up his bay mares and go out to find Frank. When he found the boy of whom he was in search they would board a train, and be in New York about eight o'clock that evening. It would not take long to identify the prisoner, of course ; and if Russell was not satisfied that all the police for miles around had been warned of his theft, and be content to

remain in jail until his trial came off, why, Mr. Wright would put the bracelets on him.

"Frank has an idea that I don't amount to much because I don't rush things," reflected the sheriff, as he stepped into his buggy and started for the country; "but I guess I know my business. We are bound to have that ambergris, or I'll know the reason why."

Mr. Wright was in a hurry this time, and the bay mare made short work of the distance that lay between the village and Frank's house. When he drove up to the gate, he found Frank hoeing in the garden.

"You don't seem to let the loss of your fortune trouble you a great deal," said the sheriff, as Frank responded to his hail. "You find other work to do, and you do it."

"What's the use of worrying over what I cannot help?" asked Frank.

"Well, that's a fact. But Russell is captured."

"Good enough!" exclaimed Frank, his face lighting up with a happy smile. "What did he do with the ambergris?"

"Perkins has it, and has gone off with it."

"Why, how is that? I don't understand you."

"You will find out about that when you get to New York," rejoined Mr. Wright; "I don't know a thing about it except what I learned from this telegram."

Frank took the dispatch handed to him, and as he read it the same odd expression that Bob had often noticed came into his face; but he handed it back without saying a word.

"I guess we had better go to the city," said the sheriff, "bring Russell back, and put him in jail."

"Yes, and then he will escape!"

"I'll bet he won't. You can trust me that far, can't you?"

"Oh, yes, I'll trust you in anything; but you know how he served you before. I'll be ready as soon as I can change my clothes. Will you get down and go in to see mother?"

"No; I'll sit here and smoke a cigar."

But when Frank went in and told his mother that the sheriff was out there, and that he had come to take him to New York, Mrs.

Ingram went out and conversed with him about the ambergris.

"I know Frank has made up his mind that he will never see his ambergris again," said Mr. Wright, "but we'll see who will come out ahead."

"Where do you suppose Perkins has gone with it?" asked Mrs. Ingram.

"I will answer that question when I get back. He is going to cheat Russell out of his share."

In a few minutes Frank came out, took his seat in the buggy, and was whirled away toward the railroad station. Of course the subject of their conversation was the one that was uppermost in their minds, but that was soon all talked out. The only thing the sheriff could advise his young friend to do was to wait patiently and see what time would do for them.

"I know it's very easy to talk patience when one hasn't anything to trouble him, but it's not so easy to me, who have it all to bear," said Frank. "You see, I am going to lose the ambergris."

"Oh, no," answered Mr. Wright; "you haven't lost it at all, yet. Perkins must come back to the Island, and we'll find means to make him tell what he has done with it. I could have made him confess before, if Russell had not been in the way."

In due time our friends arrived safely in New York, and in half an hour more the barred gate of the Tombs closed upon them. The officers there were acquainted with Mr. Wright, and, when they heard his story, conducted him and Frank to the cell Russell occupied.

"That's the man!" said Frank. "Russell, come here. What have you done with that barrel of stuff you stole from me the other night?"

"I'll tell you the honest truth about it, Frank," declared Russell, who got off his bed and came up to the grating. "I left Perkins down there by the Battery to watch the boat while I went to sell it, and the scoundrel ran off with it. I don't know where it is any more than the man in the moon."

"Didn't he give you even a hint of what

he was going to do with it?" asked Frank, feeling sadly disappointed.

"Yes, he gave me a hint," answered Russell; "he said that if he could take it back and give it up to you, you would be easy on him."

"I wouldn't prosecute him," said Frank, earnestly. "He might live in that house for years and I wouldn't say a word to him."

"But, Frank, Perkins was the one who shouldered the barrel and carried it away from the cellar," protested Russell; "I don't want you to forget that. He is just as deep in the mud as I am."

"He is your man, isn't he, Wright?" asked the officer who had accompanied our two friends to the cell. "I guess the best thing you can do is to take him away with you."

"All right," replied the sheriff, as the jailer unlocked the door and let the man out. "By the way, I wish you would keep a lookout for that boat. Frank will describe her to you before he goes. Now, Russell, if you'll behave yourself I won't put the irons on you."

"I'll do it," said the poacher, hastily; "I

have behaved myself well since I came here, —haven't I, Mr. Officer?"

"Yes, and when you get up to that rickety old jail of ours you'll think you can escape," retorted the sheriff; "but don't you try it, for every policeman has been warned that you stole the ambergris."

"Then Perkins can't get away so easily," Russell answered, with a grin. "I want to see that fellow captured, for he is trying to put it all onto me. He was the first one who laid hold of the barrel, and I know it."

It was no trouble at all to take Russell to jail, for his short experience as an escaped prisoner did not satisfy him any too well. He was put in the same cell he occupied before, and in an hour more Frank was in bed; but not to sleep. Where was that ambergris now? That was what troubled him.

Let us go back, and see what became of it.

When Perkins saw Russell leave the boat and take his way along the Battery toward Broadway he straightened up and began to keep close watch on him. He even got out of the boat to satisfy himself that his com-

panion did not come back to see that his orders were obeyed; but Russell kept on, and was presently lost in the distance.

"Now I'm all right!" exclaimed Perkins, stepping into his boat and taking hold of the lanyard which hoisted the sail. "I would like to see him catch me now. If he wants to go to prison for selling this stuff, he can do it without me. I'll take it back to Frank the first thing I do."

The work of hoisting the sail progressed very slowly, and Perkins was more than once afraid that Russell would come up before he had time to get away; but by the time the latter had begun to look at the numbers above the doors Perkins had rounded to and was sailing down the bay. Then he began to feel at his ease. For two hours he kept on his way, looking back, occasionally, to see if he was pursued by any craft that was likely to overtake him, and finally he saw a sailboat, just in front of him, which was being handled as though to intercept him. Perkins's face grew pale when he saw this. He went off on another tack, and pretty soon the sus-

.

picious-looking boat did the same ; and, furthermore, she was sailing at such a rate of speed that it was impossible for him to get away.

"I wonder if that is a police boat?" Perkins asked himself, crowding his craft until she stood almost on her side. "If it is, I'll give up; but maybe they are river pirates, who want to see what I have on board. They won't get much here, anyway."

When this thought passed through Perkins's mind he drew a long breath and thought of Frank's ambergris, which was snugly stowed away under the tarpaulin. Suppose the coming men should prove to be pirates and discovered the barrel—what should he do then?

"I swan to man!" muttered Perkins, more alarmed than ever; "I must get away from them, or I'll have to go to prison for a long term, too. I wish to goodness they would let me alone!"

When Perkins said this he did not think of putting himself in Frank's place. The boy was happy in the prize he had picked up

at sea, and he did not really suppose there was anyone around his home who would steal it. He knew there were some men who would not be any too good, but he imagined he had them at a disadvantage, and that his property was safe; but it seemed that he reckoned without his host.

Perkins crowded the boat until she seemed on the point of going over; but that made no sort of difference to his pursuers, if such they were, who crowded their own boat and quickly overhauled him. At the end of ten minutes they ran athwart his hawse and raised a hand as a signal for him to stop.

"I'm in an awful hurry and can't stop," declared Perkins, pushing his boat harder than ever. "Get out of my way; I don't want to run you down."

"No, I guess you had better not try it," replied the man who held the helm of the pursuing boat; "if you do, it will be worse for you. Hold up a bit; we want to see what sort of a cargo you have."

These words made the character of the men in the boat perfectly plain to Perkins; they

were river pirates—nothing else. He looked around, but could not see a single boat upon which he could call for assistance, and then he turned to survey the men. There were four of them, and a rougher-looking set of characters it would be hard to find. One of them stood up in the boat with a hook in his hand, and as they drew nearer to him he fastened it into the corner of Perkins's mainsail and drew the little vessels closer together. Perkins, seeing there was no earthly chance for escape, spilled his sail and gave up the contest.

"Now, what have you?" asked the man, laying down his boat-hook and climbing into Perkins's craft. "You don't seem to have much of anything."

Two more of the men were not long behind him in getting aboard Perkins's boat, leaving one man at the helm of the pirate; and after looking all around, to make sure that he did not have anything concealed somewhere, one of them kicked aside the tarpaulin which covered the barrel.

"Halloo! there's something under here," he exclaimed.

"That's so," said another, kicking the other end of the barrel; "and it sounds like something good to drink! Uncover it."

Three pairs of ready hands made light work with the tarpaulin, and in a second more the barrel was exposed to view. One of them seized it and turned it up, and the barrel was found to be headed up at both ends.

"Say, you—have you a hatchet aboard?" demanded one of the pirates.

"No; but there's nothing in there but some bait," answered Perkins.

"Some bait!" exclaimed one of the pirates. "What is that, any way? How do you use it?"

"We cut it up into little chunks, and use it for bluefish, sheepshead, and every kind of fish."

Perkins had said just enough to determine the men to see what the bait was, and their three pairs of hands went to work to unhead the barrel. Presently the straw was brought to light and sent over the boat's side, and one of them thrust his hand into the ambergris.

Something that sounded like an oath came from him, and he stepped back a pace or two.

“What is that stuff?” he asked.

“I don’t know what you call it, but it makes the best kind of bait for hungry fish,” replied Perkins.

“Dump the thing overboard!” commanded one of the pirates; “we don’t want such truck as that aboard our vessel!”

“Ain’t—ain’t you going to let me have my boat again?” stammered Perkins, fairly dazed by this proposition.

The men made no reply. Two of them took hold of the barrel, one at each end, and threw it over the side of the boat, and Perkins, so bewildered that he could not find it in his power to speak, saw the breeze and tide take possession of the barrel and carry it out to sea.

That was the last of Frank Ingram’s two thousand dollars!

CHAPTER XXI.

PET IS ASTONISHED.

“**N**O, sir; I have heard enough about them greenbacks. You never lost any money by putting it under your bed, where you sleep. It’s as safe there as though it was in the bank—safer, too, ’cause the banks ups and fails, sometimes; but you don’t speculate, and so you won’t lose it.”

Pet Wheelock talked to himself in this way while he stumped through Frank Ingram’s gate and turned into the road that led to his house. While he talked he had a queer way of taking a hop with his left leg while he was bringing his right around, and in this way he got over a good deal of ground. He went faster, as we have said, than some men who had two good legs could go. He had left his thousand dollars where he knew it would be safe, and he had no intention of going back after it. He thought that, the

boy's ambergris having disappeared, his money would come in handy when Frank wanted to settle up for the mortgage. He went home as quickly as he could go, let himself into the house, and began filling his pipe; but he had not got the tobacco more than half in before he stopped and looked down at the floor.

"Yes, sir, it has to come," he muttered, laying down his pipe and taking a key from his pocket; "that old man Barry must come to time. If his boy will steal, what's the reason he won't do it, too? It doesn't read very well, because I don't know how to write, but I'll get Frank at it to-morrow."

Pet presently opened his trunk, disclosing to view a quantity of clothing he had packed away in good order, so that he could have a change whenever he desired it, and reaching down, he drew out an account-book, well worn, to be sure, for it had passed through a good many years of service in his hands, and opened it to find the amount of Mr. Barry's indebtedness to him. In fact the whole book was devoted to that gentleman's account with him, and it was pretty well filled, too.

"Now, this book shows how much Mr. Barry owes me," resumed Pet, laying the account-book on the table and picking up his pipe. "The date and everything is there, and that's what will make it pass in law. If I have reckoned the matter up right, he has a trifle over ten thousand dollars of my money."

The sailor finished filling his pipe, and settling back in his favorite chair, gave himself up to the delights of smoking; but before he had taken half a dozen whiffs he stopped suddenly, rested his elbows on his knees, and looked thoughtfully at the floor again.

"That's what he'll do," he thought, taking time to ponder the matter which had just then come into his mind; "he'll ask to see my account-book, and when I show it to him he'll want to take it home so that he can make a copy of it. Now, that's something you sha'n't do, Mr. Barry; you'd get the account-book, and that would be the last I'd see of it."

Just then he heard footsteps outside of the gate, and on looking out to see who was coming, who should he discover but Mr. Barry himself. The man was walking along, smiling

in his usual way, but there was something about him that caused Pet the utmost consternation. He bounded from his chair, thrust the account-book into his trunk, locked it, and put the key into his pocket. Then he went to the door to meet Mr. Barry, and it was ludicrous to see the attempt he made to assume his accustomed look, so that his visitor would not think there was anything amiss.

"Ah! good-morning, Pet," said Mr. Barry, opening the gate and coming up on the porch where the old sailor was standing. "It's a fine day, and I don't see why you're not out fishing."

"I've been out, and just got back," replied Pet; "take a chair and sit down."

"I can stop but a short time," answered Mr. Barry, pulling out some papers from an inside pocket. "I want to make a settlement with you. You see you have been keeping some of your pension-money back from me, and I thought I had better come down and see about it."

It seemed that Mr. Barry knew all about it. He had had a talk with Pet on the sub-

ject before, but it had not amounted to anything, as the old sailor had begun to get angry when Mr. Barry told him that if he wanted him to act as banker he must give him all his money, and the visitor had concluded it was better policy to put up with twenty-five dollars a month than lose the whole of it. Pet had been very uneasy since the interview, but here it had been running along for three or four years, and during that time he had saved enough of his fish- and pension-money to make him a thousand dollars richer than he otherwise would have been, for Pet had got it into his mind that his visitor did not intend to make a settlement with him. He did not know how much Mr. Barry said he owed him, but he was certain he would not get all that his account-book called for.

“You told me you wanted that money to repair your boat, continued Mr. Barry. “There has been nothing done to your boat since you began keeping twenty-five dollars a month to stow away about your shanty.”

“I know I lied to you a little about that,” said the old sailor. “My boat is in better re-

pair than I am ; but I didn't think you was doing fair by me. You never gave me any writings for what money you got of me, but it's all in my account-book."

"Let me see it," pleaded Mr. Barry ; "I will compare your account with mine, and if they disagree in any way I can easily make the needed correction."

"Not much, I won't let you see it!" exclaimed Pet, beginning to show signs of indignation. "We won't disagree anywhere if you have kept your account right. You would take it home with you, and that would be the last I would ever see of it. Do you know how much you owe me?"

Mr. Barry had determined, before he went there, that if Pet asked him this question he would say about a thousand dollars ; but he did not like the way the old sailor eyed him, so he said,

"I don't exactly know how much it is, but I should say about two thousand dollars."

"Who-pee!" yelled Pet ; "do you mean to tell me that that is all the money I have given you?"

"I don't exactly know how much it is, as I told you, but that is about what I conceive it to be," answered Mr. Barry, beginning to grow a little uneasy. "How much do you say it is?"

"I tell you it's five times as much as that!" declared Pet, looking all around, as if trying to find something to throw at his visitor; "you owe me over ten thousand dollars."

"Oh, Pet! you are certainly very much mistaken," exclaimed Mr. Barry, opening his eyes to their widest extent. "That is more money than you ever saw. Ten thousand dollars! Good gracious, man! I am not made of money! You'll touch bottom a good many times before you'll get ten thousand dollars out of me!"

"I don't suppose you *are* made of money," said the old sailor, fiercely, "but you have enough to pay what is justly due me and have some left. If you don't settle up with me in a week I'll sue you; and you won't be the only one who gets into trouble through it, either."

"Well, if you have made up your mind to

sue me, why, I can't help it," replied Mr. Barry, drawing a long sigh. "I took your money to keep you from going to the bank with it. You knew I did not want to take it——"

"I don't know anything of the kind!" retorted Pet, and his face showed that he was a good deal surprised at his visitor's bold declaration. "You pestered me until I gave it to you. I have a good notion to knock you on the head!"

"That wouldn't do you any good; and, besides, you might get yourself into a worse fix than you are now," said Mr. Barry, calmly. "After all I have done for you I think you might treat me a little better. Now, Pet, there is no need of our having any words about this thing. You know I have been your friend all along, and I am ready to be so yet. Let me have your account-book, and I will take it home——"

"Well, you can just shut up about that account-book, because you can't have it!" answered Pet, with a determined tone which Mr. Barry had never known him to possess

before. "That book is where you won't get it."

"You won't mind telling me where it is?"

"If you must know, Frank Ingram has it," affirmed Pet; and his conscience never troubled him a particle for the falsehood he was uttering. "He'll keep it safe."

"That is one thing that I have thought of speaking to you about a good many times," said Mr. Barry. "You have altogether too much to do with those Ingrams. If you would let them entirely alone you would stand higher in the community than you do now."

The old sailor was amazed to hear his visitor talk in this way. While he was thinking what reply he could make that would show, once for all, he was a friend of the Ingrams, and that a person who would speak ill of them could just scratch his name off his good books, Mr. Barry went on:

"There's the youngest boy, watching Mr. Adams's grounds for seventy-five cents a night to keep poor people from fishing on his premises, and his brother——"

"I tell you, he keeps somebody besides poor people off his grounds!" Pet interrupted; "some people who ain't so poor go there, too."

"Yes, I suppose that Russell and Perkins go there occasionally, but they don't get enough to pay them for their trouble."

"Don't your boy get enough to pay him for his trouble when he goes?" asked Pet, suddenly.

"My boy?" inquired Mr. Barry, as if he could scarcely believe his ears. He had heard rumors of Lon being a poacher, but he had never believed them.

"Yes, your boy," said Pet, as if he knew what he was talking about. "I know of a time when he and Elmer Payne went out with Russell and Perkins——"

"It's not true! it's not true!" declared Mr. Barry, taken all aback. "Those boys never went out with the poachers in their lives!"

"Yes, it is true, too," insisted the old sailor. "I have known the time, morn'n once, when they went out with the poachers, who made twenty-five dollars apiece out of the trout

they caught on somebody else's grounds. I don't know whether the boys got any of the money or not, but they caught the fish."

"I don't believe a word of it!" said Mr. Barry, settling back in his chair. "Somebody has been fooling you."

"Then I suppose here is something else that isn't true," continued Pet, taking a chair from the visitor's side and moving it close to the chimney. "When I began keeping my pension-money from you, I thought it would be a good plan to find some place to hide it." Here the old sailor got up on the chair and took down the picture from the wall. "So I dug this hole and put the box that contained the money in there. Two young thieves came here while I was——"

"Be careful how you talk!" exclaimed Mr. Barry, beginning to show signs of excitement. "My boy is not a thief, and I don't want you to call him that!"

"Bring him here and I'll prove it to his face! I never mentioned your boy's name; the young thieves came in here while I was gone, and hunted until they found the money."

"How much did you have in that box?" asked Mr. Barry. He found it difficult to speak at all, but he had to say something.

"A thousand dollars!" answered Pet.

"Well, if you had let that come to me——"

"Then I never would have seen it again. But hold on!—I haven't got done talking yet. I followed the track of their wheels——"

"They are not the only boys around here who ride wheels," stammered Mr. Barry; but when he got part way through with what he was going to say he stopped. He rapidly thought over the names of all the boys who lived in the neighborhood, but to save his life he could not think of one who owned a wheel. "Besides, you don't know that they came here on wheels."

The old sailor paid no attention to his interruption.

"When I found that my money was gone," he continued, getting down from his chair, "I went out and began to nose around a bit, and I—— But come along and I'll show you; you'll believe the evidence of your eyes, no matter how little confidence you have in me."

For fear Mr. Barry would fail to go with him, Pet took him by the arm and raised him to his feet. Pet had an iron grasp, and he was not anyways particular about using it. His visitor winced, but got up and followed him. When the old sailor opened the gate, he stopped and pointed to the wheel-prints in the soft earth.

"That led me to believe I knew who the thieves were," he went on. "Yes, I'll call them thieves, too, for that's just what they are. Then I followed them up. Come along a little farther; I haven't got done with you yet."

The visitor did not wait to feel that grip on his arm again. When Pet started off, Mr. Barry was close at his side, and in a few minutes they arrived at the log under which the boys had concealed their plunder.

"I found the box right there," explained Pet, pointing out the exact spot.

"Well, if you know who did it you can have them arrested," said Mr. Barry. He did not need any more evidence to convince him that his boy was one of the young thieves, for the proof of their guilt was plain enough.

"There were two of them, and at the roadside they turned to go home; they went square toward your house, too. I told you that if I sued you, you would not be the only one to suffer," declared the old sailor.

"When you bring this up in court, with witnesses to prove it, I shall have to believe it; but I tell you I don't believe a word of it now," said Mr. Barry, who had managed to get his thoughts together. "But there is another thing I wanted to speak to you about. You have been living here on my grounds rent free for a good many years, and I think it about time you began to pay something for it."

Pet was astonished. For a minute or two he could not speak.

"All the other squatters pay rent, and I don't see why you are any better than the rest of them," added the visitor.

"That's news to me! I didn't know you wanted any rent for your place."

"If the others pay, you ought to be willing to keep up your end of the yoke."

"How much are you going to charge me?"

“ Well, you have been here a good many years, and while you were poor I didn’t say anything to you about it; but now that you’re rich—— Why, Pet, you have more money than I have!”

“ That’s neither here nor there!” exclaimed Pet. “ How much rent are you going to charge me?”

“ I think a hundred dollars a year would be about right.”

“ If I move, of course I take my house with me?”

“ No, you don’t! That house is an improvement, and all the improvements you make stay on the place.”

This was very nearly the course that Russell, the poacher, endeavored to pursue when he tried to exchange his mortgage with Frank Ingram for the ambergris. He told Frank, at the beginning, that the face of the mortgage could stay where it was, and so long as he got the interest on it he would be satisfied, even though it ran for ten years; but when he found that that did not bring the ambergris he changed his tune and told Frank he

wanted the money right away, because there was a man willing to pay him more for it. If Mr. Barry had been able to make a settlement with Pet on his own terms he would not have said a word about the rent. He knew that all the squatters, who had comfortable houses erected on other men's grounds in which they expected to pass their declining years, paid no rent whatever; but he hoped to work on Pet's ignorance. However, the old sailor knew a thing or two, even if he had been to sea since he was "knee-high to a duck." He could not write, but he had a good deal of common sense.

"Well, now just listen to me and I'll tell you something," said Pet, bending over and placing his face close to Mr. Barry's. "I ain't a-going to pay one cent! Do you hear that? Not a single, solitary cent do I pay for the rent of your place," repeated the old fellow; "and if you make me move away from it, I'll have the house!"

"Well, I'm sorry you feel that way about it," replied Mr. Barry, who thought it time to get away. "You can consult any lawyer——"



"I ain't a-going to pay one cent."

"I don't want no lawyer," declared Pet; "I'm as good a lawyer as I need. If you wanted rent for your place you ought to have told me so before. But there's one thing about it, Mr. Barry—you must come down and make a settlement with me inside of a week, or some little things I have told you about will have to come out."

"Very good!" said Mr. Barry. "Then I'll make a settlement with you to this effect—you'll get your things out of that house in less than a week or I'll have a constable after you."

"When I go I'll take the house," asserted Pet.

"No, you'll leave the house, for that is mine."

"Will I have to leave the garden truck?"

"No, that is yours; you can go and gather up the truck as fast as you may need it."

"Well, good-by, if you call that going. The next time I see you I'll be able to talk plainly to you."

Mr. Barry made no reply; he disappeared in the bushes, and the old sailor turned about and went into the house.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OLD SAILOR BURNED OUT.

“**I** WONDER if what I told old man Barry was the truth?” reflected Pet, as he opened the gate and entered the house. “It wouldn’t be strange if he tried to rent the place to somebody for a hundred dollars a year,” added the old sailor, looking around him with a glance of admiration. “I have everything very neat and comfortable here, but I won’t pay him one hundred cents a year for it. If I go, and I don’t see what’s to hinder me from going, I’ll take the house with me. Now, as soon as Frank has been down to see the sheriff, I’ll make my word good in regard to that account-book.”

Pet did not do much that day but sit and smoke, and when the sun told him that it was pretty near supper-time he arose, crowded his account-book into his pocket, and took his way toward Frank’s house.

"I really wish I knew where that ambergris was," thought he; and as he was in something of a hurry, he took his peculiar hop as he went along, and thus made good headway. "But I *do* know where it is, and so does that scoundrel, Russell. I wish I could get a chance at him; I'd make him think a man with two good legs had been at him—sure!"

He arrived at last at Frank's house, and found him sitting on the back porch with his mother. A glance at his face was all that was necessary to tell Pet everything he wanted to know.

"It didn't do you any good to go and see that man Wright—did it?" he asked. "He ain't a-going to get that ambergris for you."

"Of course he can't do it all in one day," answered Frank; "but he is going to arrest Russell and Perkins."

"Well, there will be that much done," said the old sailor, accepting the chair which Frank brought out for him.

"He says he'll tell me where that ambergris is hidden by this time to-morrow night," added Frank.

"That's better than I thought he could do," answered Pet, a smile overspreading his face; "but I don't like to wait so long."

"What has come over you all of a sudden?" asked Frank; "you don't look like yourself. Is it about that money? Well, I have seen Russell, and I told him that if he wanted his money he could come up here and get it; I'm going to take it out of your thousand dollars."

"That's all right!" exclaimed Pet; "that's all right! but he won't come after it; he'll send his old woman."

"She can't have it!" declared Frank. "I told him I would pay it to him, and to nobody else, and that I should not pay any more interest on it from this day."

While Frank was talking Pet was fumbling in his pocket, and presently brought forth his account-book. He handed it over without a word, and Frank took and opened it. What he saw was all Greek to him.

"What is this you have scribbled down here?" he inquired.

"That's my account with Mr. Barry," answered Pet. "I know I can't write very

well, but I can print, and every dollar I have given him is down there. The figures are all right—ain't they?"

"Yes, they are all right. What do you want me to do with this?"

"I want you to make out a straight account from it, any time you feel like doing something, so that Barry can read it."

"I can do it now as well as at any other time; but you will have to read this for me."

"I can do that," said Pet, as he arose and followed Frank into the dining-room. "I have heard of some lawyer who hangs out somewhere—I believe his home is in Philadelphia—who has to keep a clerk who can read his writing for him when it gets cold; but I'm not quite as bad off as he is. I say, Frank," he added, as soon as they got out of hearing of Mrs. Ingram, who still sat on the back porch, "I've had the biggest kind of a time with that man to-day."

"What man do you mean—Mr. Barry?"

"He's the very chap. He came down to my house and said he wanted to make a settlement with me. He had a lot of papers in his

pocket, which I didn't look at, because I couldn't have made head or tale of 'em if I had looked at 'em. I asked him how much he owed me, and what do you think he said?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Frank; "he didn't fall far short of ten thousand dollars, did he?"

"He said I was mistaken, when I told him what he owed me," said the old sailor, getting upon his feet and flourishing his clenched hands over his head; "he said that two thousand dollars was all that I had coming to me."

"Well, he's a dishonest man!" declared Frank, whose astonishment knew no bounds.

"I didn't call him that, but I was wishing I had my wooden leg in my hands for about two minutes!"

"It's lucky you didn't have it, or you might have hurt him so badly that he wouldn't have got over it," said Frank, opening the account-book and reading an entry which told him that Pet had given Mr. Barry three thousand dollars of his back pay at one time. "Why, you gave him more than two thousand dollars at one time!" he exclaimed.

"I know it, but he had forgotten that. And, Frank, that isn't the only thing he told me. How much rent do you think I ought to pay him for the spot on which I have built my house?"

"How much rent? Not a cent!"

"I told him I wouldn't pay anything, and he got mad and said, if I didn't pay him up at the rate of one hundred dollars a year, in less'n a week he'd have a constable after me."

"It's the greatest imposition I ever heard of!" declared Frank, settling back in his chair. "But I'll tell you what you can do. I have often wished that you lived near to me, and when you get ready to change your residence you can move your house——"

"But there's the trouble," answered the old sailor. "I can't move the house; he says it's his, and I must leave it there."

"Why, he wants to cheat you out of everything!"

"It looks that way. The house is an improvement, and he'll charge what it's worth for my rent."

"Let it go until I can see Mr. Wright about

it," remarked Frank; "he'll know just what ought to be done."

"I don't think much of your choice of advisers," replied Pet, looking down at the carpet; "Wright hasn't done a single thing toward helping you get that ambergris."

"Go to Fuller, then."

"Oh, he's too young! he's too young!" was the answer; "I must have somebody with hair as white as mine."

"Well, let the whole thing go for the present, and we'll talk about it at some future time," said Frank, opening the account-book at the first page of the entries. "If I don't get this thing done now, I won't get it done to-night. What's this? April 10, one hundred dollars?"

"January 20," corrected Pet.

"What did you pay him that much for?"

"You see that was the first pension-money I received. Mr. Barry had to go to Washington to get it, and so I gave it all to him. I didn't know what to do with it, and the way that man bothered me day and night to make him my banker was enough to drive one crazy."

“You couldn’t have selected a worse man,” declared Frank. “But we must have something to show who the account is with. How will this answer? ‘Perry Wheelock, in account with J. F. Barry, for pension-money paid him at various times from Jan. 20, 1867, to June 25, 1890.’ By gracious! Pet, you are wealthy already. That covers a period of twenty-three years.”

“I knew it was a long time,” the old sailor assented; “and now Barry wants to cheat me out of my savings.”

“You have more than ten thousand dollars coming to you by your own account,” said Frank, when he had got the heading to suit himself. “Go on—what next?”

It was more trouble to make the “account straight” so that Mr. Barry could read it than one would think possible, for every once in a while Pet came to a word he could not make out to save his life. That brought Frank to his assistance, and between them they finally found out what it was. While they were engaged in this way the dishes were heard rattling, and presently they were called in to

supper. Pet looked down at his clothes and hesitated.

“Your clothes will do well enough, so come on and make no fuss about it,” insisted Frank, taking hold of the sailor and lifting him to his feet. “If you had eaten in your working-clothes as often as I have you wouldn’t think anything about it.”

The old sailor accepted the invitation, and although he ate with his knife, and poured his tea out into his saucer when he wanted to get it cool enough to drink, he behaved better than some men do who have had greater opportunities to learn how things ought to be done. When supper was finished and he had pushed back his chair he said,

“I tell you, woman’s cooking comes nice once in a while. When a man has lived on scouse and doughboy as long as I have, and is sometimes obliged to cook it when he is almost ready to drop with fatigue, it’s nice to have somebody get your supper for you.”

“Now, Pet, smoke your pipe,” ordered Frank, as they went back to their accounts.

“Father used to smoke, and we don’t dislike the smell of tobacco at all.”

Equipped with his ancient and favorite briar-root, Pet went to work at a faster gait than before, and by ten o’clock the account was finished. It covered four pages of foolscap. Frank reckoned it all up, after he was done, and found that Mr. Barry’s indebtedness amounted to eleven thousand three hundred dollars.

“I tell you, that’s a heap more money than I thought I had,” declared the old sailor. “If that chap had given me what I wanted him to, he would have made just thirteen hundred dollars by it.”

Frank did not know what to say. It was too deep for him, and he wanted to see Mr. Wright about it. Pet had no writings at all to show what Mr. Barry owed him, and what if he should deny the amount and decline to settle at all? That was what bothered Frank; but the old sailor did not look far enough into the law for that, and he was as happy as a man could be. Frank pinned the leaves together in the order in which they

belonged, folded them up, and handed the statement to Pet, who put it into the bosom of his shirt.

"Now I guess we're all right, and I'll take this down to Mr. Barry and let him have it," said he. "He wanted my account-book, but I wouldn't let him have it."

"That was a sharper trick than I ever knew you to be guilty of before," laughed Frank, who admired the sailor's shrewdness. "You never would have seen your account-book again. He can read that, if he can read writing at all, and I hope he'll see the necessity of making a settlement with you at once."

"You *hope* he'll do it?" exclaimed Pet. "I swan to man! Haven't I got the thing here in black and white? Let's see him deny it, and I'll have a constable after him before he can think twice. Mrs. Ingram, I must bid you good-night."

"Pet hasn't got the thing as safe as he thinks he has," declared Frank, when the sound of the old sailor's footsteps had died away. "Suppose Mr. Barry denies the debt? —what's he going to do about it?"

"You copied it from his book, did you not?" asked his mother.

"Yes, I did; but what is there to hinder Barry from saying that Pet put down some amounts he did not receive? It would be very easy for him to put down fifty dollars when Mr. Barry's back was turned. I don't know what the latter will do, and I am very anxious to find out."

"You talk as though Mr. Barry was going to cheat him," said his mother, reproachfully.

"That is just what he means to do. I know he acted very kind to you in letting that mortgage go so long, but he seems to have turned over a new leaf."

"I didn't ask Frank to take charge of my account-book," Pet remarked to himself as he pursued his way homeward; "he has done so much for me that I hate to ask him to do anything else. I'll keep it by me for a few days; then I'll ask him to take it and put it with my money."

The old sailor went to sleep with his precious account-book inside his shirt, and when four

o'clock came he was up and ready for business. He had only two days more to fish in, for then the sign would come wrong in the Zodiac and the fish would not come near his hook.

"Now, how do you suppose the fish know that?" he thought, as he hauled on his trousers. "Nobody can't tell; and yet they'll steer clear of the hook by day after to-morrow. Fish know a heap more than some men give them credit for."

Pet's luck that day was all that could have been asked by anybody. Long before noon his bait was all gone, and the only thing he could do was go home and hoe in his garden. He sold his fish to the dealer, and after getting an early dinner he went out with his hoe and stayed until sundown. He did not have any tin box in which to put his day's earnings away. That was in Frank Ingram's charge, and he thought it would not be worth while to go up there for a few dollars when he might hand it to Frank the next time they met. But he would not have seen the boy there if he had gone, for at that time he was sitting almost within arm's reach of the hiding-

place of his ambergris, and a little while afterward he was lying bound and helpless in the bushes. How glad Pet would have been to have rushed to Frank's assistance about that time. But he did not know anything about it. He kept busy at his work as long as he could see, and then went in to get a late supper before going to bed. The next day he went out fishing again, as usual, and was blessed with the best of luck; but when he turned his boat toward the shore, preparatory to coming home, he saw something that filled him with horror. It was a dense smoke coming up from behind the trees, which told him that some fisherman who had built his house on the beach was being burned out. How Pet thanked his lucky stars that he had not discovered flames on a vessel on which he was employed!

"I've been burned out a time or two, and somehow that is something a fellow can't get used to," soliloquized the old sailor. "The last time my ship caught fire I was off Hatteras, and I just got away with my life, and that was all. I hope it's somebody who can

stand the loss, for I know I shouldn't like to be burned out."

Pet kept his eyes fastened upon the smoke as he rounded to, and when he came out from behind some bushes which concealed the burning house he dropped his tiller and sprang to his feet with a wild yell; he could plainly see that it was his own house, or what there was left of it. He had been so much engaged in fishing that he did not watch the shore at all, and the house had caught fire and been burned before Pet knew what was going on. It was five miles to shore, and never had his boat seemed to go so slowly before. As he drew nearer he saw that there was a party of men in front of the house, but they were all standing by, with their hands in their pockets, and apparently doing nothing to save either it or its furniture.

"I swan to man it's mine!" exclaimed the old sailor, who could not conceive how it was possible for his house to burn down. "I put out the fire that I cooked my breakfast by, and I just know it!"

There was only one thing for Pet to do, and

that was to sit down in the stern of the boat and wait as patiently as he could for the wind to carry him to the beach. He kept up a furious thinking all the while, but he did not utter his thoughts even to himself. Finally he reached the buoy to which his skiff was made fast. He did not stop to throw out his fish, this time, but hastily changed one boat for the other, jumped into his skiff, and pulled toward the beach the best he knew how. When his boat got near enough, a couple of men grabbed it and drew it out of the water.

"Well, Pet, your house has gone up in smoke," remarked one.

"So I see," answered the old sailor, putting his hands into his pockets and surveying the smoking ruins before him. "I wonder who has been around here with any fire?"

"No doubt you set it a-going yourself," replied the man; "when you lit your pipe you threw the match among some papers, or something."

"There ain't no papers about my house," declared Pet; "I always lift up my stove-lid and put the matches in there."

"But you may have been on the porch," said another; "this grass will catch mighty easy."

"I always shake the match, in the first place, to make sure that it's out," answered Pet, "and then I step on it. I tell you, boys, I've been caught at sea more times than I can remember, when my vessel burned up, and I've grown to be mighty careful of fire. How did you happen to see it?"

"I saw it as I came along, just as it was breaking out, and got some fellows to help me fight it. We got some of the furniture out, but the rest had to go."

Almost without knowing it, Pet put his hand into his bosom and felt something there. His account-book was safe!

"Somebody's been here and set my house on fire!" asserted the old sailor, after he had walked around the ruins two or three times. "Now, who was it?"

The men looked surprised, but did not answer him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ABOUT VARIOUS THINGS.

“YES, sir; if my house had been left entirely alone, as she was when I went out fishing, she never would have thought of burning herself up!” said the old sailor, taking off his tarpaulin and wiping the big drops of perspiration from his face. “Somebody has been around here with fire, and that’s what’s the matter.”

“You don’t think that Russell did it, do you?” asked one.

“No; he’s in jail.”

“But he escaped—and Perkins, too.”

Pet Wheelock could only look his surprise. He had been busy with his own affairs since Russell had been arrested, and all the information he got was from Frank; but he had not seen the boy for two days, and consequently he was not posted in regard to what had happened during that time.

"He has been arrested again, and is back in the lockup," said another.

"But they didn't get the ambergris," declared a third. "You know everything that Frank Ingram does, Pet, and I would like to know if what he got out of the sea is really worth so much money to him?" he continued.

"Yes, he got a pile of stuff out there. He went to New York to see about it, and a man there told him he would give two thousand dollars for it. Was Perkins jerked up at the same time Russell was?"

"No; and that's what beats me—Perkins and the ambergris and the boat are gone," was the reply.

"Gone where?" asked Pet.

"You tell. Russell went ashore to sell the ambergris——"

"Then they must have had it in New York," interrupted Pet, who was greatly astonished.

"That's where they went; and when Russell went ashore, to see what he could do with it, Perkins rounds the boat to and comes out."

"And don't anybody know where he is?"

"He is somewhere between this port and

New York. It's my belief that he got tired of his bargain and is going to give that ambergris back to Frank, which is the best thing he could do."

"Well," remarked the old sailor, taking off his hat again, "if I stay here talking with you I won't get anything done. There's no use in crying over spilt milk. I see that you boys have saved my baskets and wheelbarrow, so I guess I'll clean my fish and take them up to the dealer's. I thank you for saving what you did."

The men remarked that that was all right—he would have done as much for them if he had been in their place—and started toward home, while Pet threw his baskets into the wheelbarrow and took them down to the place where his skiff was lying. Then he got into his tender and pushed off toward his sailboat.

"I tell you, a lot of things happened while I was not around; and what those fellows say about Russell breaking out of jail is rather ahead of my time," muttered Pet, as he seated himself at the oars. "But I sha'n't go near Frank to bother him with questions to-day;

I'll stay down here until to-morrow, and then I'll go up and leave him my account-book."

The old sailor had a good many things to occupy his mind, and during the whole of that day he scarcely realized what he was doing. He cleaned his fish and took them up to the dealer's, and while there he heard more about Russell, but he did not pay much attention to it; he thought that if he waited until he saw Frank he would "get the straight of the matter," and that was what he wanted more than anything else. When he got back to the ruins of his house he filled his pipe and sat down on his chest—it was his old sailor chest, too; one that had been to China with him more than once—to think the matter over.

"I wonder if they have saved any provisions?" thought he. "After I get some dinner I can look at the thing calmly. I see they saved the stove and a few lengths of pipe, anyway."

After he had started his pipe properly, Pet began looking about among his furniture for some provisions, and, much to his surprise, found an old barrel that was literally crammed

full of eatables he most needed. One thing came to his mind as he took the provisions out and laid them carefully on the chest, and that was that none of the men who had been there and saved this material from the fire had ever been aboard a ship—such stowing away of things he had never seen before ; but he managed to get out what he wanted, and so was not very severe on the rescuers.

To start a fire and cook his dinner was a matter of no little difficulty, for the wind blew the smoke down the pipe, and finally obliged him to turn the stove around so that he got the draught just right. Then everything went along swimmingly. He did not have the scouse and doughboy this time—he was much too busy for that—but he had ham, bread and coffee, and with that he was satisfied. Then he filled his pipe again and set to work to carry his furniture under cover of the trees, to protect it from the weather, for he calculated he would have to stay there until he got his new house built.

“And I’ll bet I don’t put it up on Mr. Barry’s lot,” he said to himself, with a severe

frown, at the same time shaking his fist at an imaginary man on the beach ; " I'll put it up on Frank's lot, and then I know I'll get it rent free. Now, I guess I'll sling my hammock."

Pet's hammock was among the few things that had been saved by the men who had reached the burning house before he did, and it had been thrown, together with its bed-clothes, lashings, and other fixings, on a heap with the rest of his furniture. Slowly he fished them out, and, selecting two trees about the right distance apart, made the hammock fast to them, after which he made up his bed with as much care as any housewife would have taken.

By this time it began to grow dark, and after the old sailor had employed himself for quite a while in gathering sticks of dry wood he built a fire, tumbled into his hammock, and slept the sleep of the healthy. His ruined home did not trouble him at all.

" All you star-bo'lines, ahoy !" he shouted when he awoke from his sleep shortly after four o'clock. " Thanks to the rebel who shot

my leg off so long a go, I have obeyed that order for the last time; but I do wish I had two good legs on me, so that I could obey the order once more."

His breakfast was the same as his supper, with the addition of a few potatoes, which he baked in the oven. When it was over, dishes had to be washed, the fire put out, and then he was ready to call on Frank. Somehow or other a shade of anxiety overspread his face whenever he thought of that boy and his brother. He wanted to learn something about Perkins; for until that man was found, together with the stolen property, Frank was just two thousand dollars out of pocket. He had his breakfast a little earlier than Frank, for when he got to the latter's house the boy was just engaged in setting the table. Pet looked closely at him as he went up, but Frank was smiling, as usual. There was one thing the old sailor did not know, and that was that Frank always, in his mother's presence, wore a cheerful look, which led her to believe everything was working all right.

"Halloo! my hearty," exclaimed Pet as,

without waiting for an invitation, he came up the steps. "Have you heard anything about your ambergris yet?"

"No, I haven't," answered Frank, cheerfully; "but I have been to New York, and found they had been there and tried to sell it. Mr. Wright went with me; he brought Russell along with him and put the rascal back into jail, and says he will stay there, this time."

"Frank," said Pet, lowering his voice to a confidential whisper, "I believe you are going to get that ambergris again."

"Somehow or other that has been running in my mind, too," answered Frank; "but what makes you think so?"

"I believe Perkins has got tired of this thieving business and wants to get out of it the easiest way he can; he thinks you won't prosecute him if he brings the stuff back to you."

"And neither will I," declared Frank, earnestly.

"Maybe Mr. Wright, or some of those big fellows who make the law their business, will

have something to say about that," suggested Pet. "If you don't shove the law against him, perhaps they will."

"Then he can't blame me for it. But what has come over you?—you look so happy. What is the good word with you?"

"I have three hundred dollars more coming to me than I had yesterday morning!" replied the old sailor.

"Why, how does that come? Have you been at sea and caught more ambergris? If you have, don't put it where anybody can get it."

"You are the lucky fellow, so far as the ambergris is concerned. You remember that when I built my house you advised me to take out a little insurance on it,—don't you? Well, the house has gone up!"

"You don't mean to say that it caught fire!" exclaimed Frank, who was lost in astonishment.

"Yes, she caught fire, and all I have left is a portion of my furniture."

"When did it burn?" asked Frank, who hardly believed the story, even if Pet did tell it.

The old sailor told what he knew of the destruction of the house, and when he got through he found that he had the entire family as listeners. Mrs. Ingram had come out of the kitchen with their breakfast in her hands, and Bob had just returned from watching Mr. Adams's grounds. They were all greatly surprised, and there was not one of them who believed that the house had caught fire of itself, for they knew how very careful the old sailor was.

"You didn't see anything of the flames, did you, mother?" asked Frank.

"No; the trees are so thick around here that I did not see anything of it," replied Mrs. Ingram.

"Somebody set that house a-going!" declared Bob; and to show how much in earnest he was in what he said he hit his left hand with his right and looked hard at Pet. "Now, who has anything against you?"

"Oh, there are plenty around here who have something against me," answered the latter, with a laugh, "but old man Barry has been running in my head more than anybody

else. Say, Frank, he wanted this account-book of mine to take home and copy it, so that he could read it; I want you to take it and keep it. Put it in the box with my money and it will be safe."

"I don't like to do that," said Frank, placing his hands behind him and looking at the book as Pet extended it toward him.

"I don't care whether you like it or not," insisted Pet; "that's the only place for the book to go. I have that straight copy of yours, and I shall give it to him to-day."

"Pet, I am going to put that money of yours in the bank," exclaimed Frank; "you are putting altogether too much on me."

"I don't care where you put it, so long as it's safe; I can't keep it around me—that has been made very plain."

"And where did you stay last night?" asked Bob.

"Down there," replied the old sailor.

"Down where?"

"Oh, I slung up my hammock in the woods, if you must know," he explained, as he began to see he was likely to be hauled over the coals.

"If I was big enough," said Bob, walking up and laying his hand on the old sailor's collar, "I would take you by the scuff of the neck and give you a good shaking up."

"I swan to man! What have I done?" asked Pet.

"You stayed down there, when, by coming here, you could have had a bed to sleep in."

"Oh, that's all right," declared Pet; "I slept as snug as a bug in a rug, and got up about the time the first part of the port watch was engaged in washing the decks; but seeing that I didn't have any decks to wash, I went to work and got my breakfast."

"Sit down with us and have some more," commanded Frank.

"I thank you, but I have had my breakfast already; and now that I have a straight copy of my account, I guess I'll go down and give it to old man Barry the first thing I do. Now, remember, I have left all my money safe in your hands."

"And I'll be responsible for it no longer!" declared Frank, emphatically; "I'll put it in the bank before I sleep soundly to-night."

“All right!” answered Pet, starting off with his usual hop; “Mrs. Ingram, I wish you a very good-morning.”

“You won’t find him up, if you go down there now,” said Bob.

“No matter; I’ll stay until he does get up.”

While they were eating breakfast, the three could talk of nothing else but the loss of the old sailor’s house and the calmness of temper with which he submitted to it. Bob was about as mad as he could be, and determined that before the day passed he would have Mr. Barry arrested, and make him tell where he was when the house caught fire.

But Pet had long since learned to surrender to circumstances he could not control; he had been taught it during many years at sea, on board of vessels that were wrecked or burned, when he had found himself left with nothing but the clothes he stood in; and though his house was gone, and there was nothing he could say or do that would bring it back again, yet he had some consolation in the fact that by following Frank’s advice he

would come into possession of three hundred dollars, which would be paid over to him as soon as he could induce somebody to look into the matter.

"I swan to man!—there's one thing I forgot," thought Pet, stopping in the road and looking back at Frank's house. "Who has that three hundred dollars of mine, and who do I want to see about getting it? I must see Frank, for I want to know how I am to get the money."

The old sailor started on again, making extra good time for a man with only one leg, and turned up the wagon-road that led to Mr. Barry's house. The first persons he saw were the old gentleman and his hopeful son, who seemed to be looking at the flowers in the yard. They glanced up as they heard the sound of his footsteps, and one of them, at least, had a desire to take to his heels.

"What does that old fellow want here?" asked Lon, looking around, as if seeking some way of escape. "Father, I believe he has come up here for a settlement with you."

"Well, he can have it any time he wants

it," replied his father. "All I want to know is how much I owe him, and I will give him the money before he goes out of the gate."

Lon tried hard to assume his usual look, but only succeeded in calling a guilty expression to his face, while his father smiled and looked as bland as usual.

"Good-morning, Pet," said Mr. Barry; "you look particularly happy this morning. Have you that account made out so that I can read it? Well, how much does it say I owe you?"

"There's the account," said the old sailor, drawing out the papers, which he handed over to Mr. Barry; "every cent that I have given you is down there."

"Did you take into consideration the rent of your place?" asked Mr. Barry.

"No, I didn't; I can't pay you any rent for that house—it's gone up in smoke!"

"Has it burned?" queried Lon.

"I should say so! I'll put up a new house, and this time I'll put it up on Frank Ingram's lot. I declare, that's another thing I forgot to speak to him about," added Pet to

himself; "but I guess he'll let me do it, anyway."

"I'm sorry to hear that your house has been burned, but that will not affect the rent," remarked Mr. Barry; "you will have to pay for it up to the time you ceased living in it."

"Eleven thousand three hundred dollars!" exclaimed Lon, for he had looked over his father's shoulder while he was turning the papers to get at the full amount. "Father, I knew you hadn't paid him all you owed him; he gave you three thousand dollars at the time his pension was increased."

"Lon, I'll thank you to go into the house and mind your own business!" said Mr. Barry, turning fiercely on his son; "you had no right to be looking over my shoulder."

"Aha!" thought Pet to himself—"the whole thing is out, now!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

PET GOES TO HIS HAMMOCK.

LON BARRY, completely overwhelmed by the magnitude of his father's indebtedness to Pet Wheelock, turned reluctantly about and walked toward the house, while Mr. Barry stood nonplussed and looked at the sailor for a moment and then down at the papers he held in his hand. He evidently wanted to go where he could sit down, and with this thought uppermost in his mind he started toward some shade trees that happened to be standing near, beneath which were some chairs the family had put there for use on sunshiny afternoons. Pet saw him go, but remained where he was until Mr. Barry beckoned to him with his hand.

"Come here a moment, Pet," said he ; but his voice did not have its usual sharp twang ;
"I want to see you."

"Well, I don't know as I want to see you,"

replied Pet, drawing himself up to his full height.

"I want to ask you about this account," continued Mr. Barry; "you have it wrong somewhere."

"No, I haven't!" retorted Pet, angrily; "every deposit I made with you is down there; and I have the dates of them, too."

"Let me see your account-book," said Mr. Barry, reaching out his hand. "If you had let me bring it home, as I wanted to, I could have shown you where you made the mistake."

"Yes, but you see I was too sharp for that; the account-book is in safe hands!"

"Who has it?" asked Mr. Barry, as if the answer did not interest him one way or the other.

"I told you yesterday that Frank Ingram has it." ("And, by the way, that is the truth, now," he added to himself.) "Frank has put it away on top of the money your boy stole from me——"

"I wish you would stop talking that way about Lon!" exclaimed Mr. Barry, pettishly; "he never saw your money!"

“Bring him here, and if he answers such questions as I’ll ask him, I’ll say he didn’t take it. You dassent do it!”

“No; but you may have to answer more questions than you will care to in a court of justice. I don’t intend to let this thing drop here. You have slandered one of the first families on the Island, and you must make your words good.”

“I’ll answer any questions a justice of the peace may ask me! Lon and Elmer came there on their wheels——”

“But you did not see them. Now, I want to know if you saw them with the money in their hands?”

“No, I didn’t; but they’re the only ones about here that ride wheels.”

“If you think that would do for evidence, you are badly mistaken; you got some of that from Frank Ingram.”

“I didn’t get a word of it from him!” declared the old sailor, advancing a step or two closer to Mr. Barry; “I told him that I believed your boy and Elmer had taken my money, and I believe so yet.”

"Well, we will let it pass until the proper time comes. You say Frank has your account-book. I am anxious about that, for I may want to see it."

"Yes, sir, he has it, and he sleeps with it under his pillow every night, and the man who tries to get it will run against a stump."

"I shall go to him and ask him to let me see it," said Mr. Barry, as if he felt slightly cut because Pet had hinted that he would try to take his account-book without saying anything to Frank about it; "I shall be open and above board with everything I do. I want to look it over, and see where you have made your mistake."

"I tell you there ain't no mistake about it!" insisted the old sailor; "whatever I gave you I set down there, and that's all there is about it. If you'll take that smooth copy and compare it with your own, you'll see that everything is all straight."

"Well, we will let this go until some future time," said Mr. Barry, arising to his feet as if to intimate that he had said all he wanted

to ; " I want time to examine my account with you."

" We'll let it go for a week from to-day and no longer," answered the old sailor ; " then if you don't come to me and hand over them eleven thousand dollars I'll put you in jail. And not only you, but I'll put your boy there, too !"

" Very good," replied Mr. Barry ; " we will see who will come out on top of the heap."

Pet started off with his usual hop, and was well out of the gate and a long distance down the road before Mr. Barry stopped looking at him ; then he settled down and began to study the accounts which had been given him. So retentive was his memory that he could recall almost every item that appeared before him. Where was this money, and did he mean to return it all to its rightful owner ? Some of it had been lost in speculation, and the rest he had in the bank. But he had at first intended to hold fast to it ; the wound that Perry Wheelock got in defending his country was nothing to him. People got shot if they went to war, and if Pet was of a mind to risk that,

why, he was willing, and had nothing to do with it.

"I didn't think the ignorant fellow knew how to use a pen," mused Mr. Barry, pacing back and forth under the shade of the trees; "had I been aware of it, I would have pursued a different plan. When I heard his house was burned, I thought that account-book had gone up—I did not believe he had given it into the keeping of Frank Ingram; but I believe it now. Well, I am not done yet. Frank keeps that book, with the money, under his bed. If his house goes up in smoke, too, perhaps it will take the account-book and money with it. You are just the boy I want to see," continued Mr. Barry, as his son came out at that moment. Lon had seen Pet go out at the gate, and he returned to hear about the immense amount of money his father owed Pet.

"Has he gone?" asked Lon, looking all around.

"Yes," answered his father, in a tone of voice that showed that he was well rid of him.

"But, father, you certainly don't owe him

any such an amount as he says you do. My gracious! that is more money than I ever saw!"

"It is more money than Pet ever saw, too. How he will ever be able to make a jury believe that I am indebted to him in so large a sum beats me. Now, Alonzo, I want to know what he means by telling me that you stole the money he had in his house."

Lon was prepared for this. He opened his eyes to their widest extent and stared at his father; but what would seem to others as an expression of astonishment appeared to Mr. Barry as an admission of guilt. He had caught his son in several barefaced falsehoods, and he knew him too well.

"What money do you mean?" stammered Lon.

"I mean the money that he ought to have paid me when he drew his pension," said Mr. Barry. "He kept a lot of that money back, and hid it somewhere about his shanty, and while he was out fishing some one went there and stole it."

"And does he say I had a hand in it?"

asked Lon, looking down at the ground, for he could not bear to meet his father's eyes. Mr. Barry looked at him as if he knew all about it.

"You and Elmer," was the reply; "you went there on your wheels, and he followed your trail and found his money."

Lon did not know what to say; he sat down on one of the chairs and turned his back to his father.

"Now, Alonzo, I want to know the truth about this matter," continued Mr. Barry. "Pet says he is going to put me in jail if I don't pay him eleven thousand dollars in a week's time——"

"Oh, father!" cried Lon; "you don't owe him so large a sum of money as that, do you?"

"I tell you that is more money than he ever saw; I owe him two thousand dollars, and that is every cent I do owe him. And he is going to put you in jail, too—that is the worst of it."

"In jail!" stammered Lon; "and I never saw his money!"

"Alonzo, it is all out on you, and you may as well confess it at first as at last. How did you get into his house?"

"Elmer had a key that fit the lock of his door," said Lon, who had suddenly determined he would tell the truth in the matter; "it was easy sailing after that."

"How did you find his money?"

"We took a picture down, and found a place dug out of the wall. He had his money hid there, in a tin box, and we were struck with amazement when we found we had all of a thousand dollars, and were going to put it back; but Pet came home just in the wrong time—we couldn't return it without his seeing us."

"And then?" asked Mr. Barry. He knew that Lon had not told him all his story; he wanted to know how Pet stumbled onto his money.

"We hid it under a log in the woods, and when we afterward went for it the log was pried out and the box was gone."

"I don't see why you wanted his money, any way," said his father, who remained silent

for some little time; "I gave you all the money you needed."

"You gave me a little, but you didn't give me enough," answered Lon, who was resolved that his father should know the whole truth. "Twenty cents is the most you ever gave me at one time."

"That was because you spent it for billiards, and I don't care to have my hard earnings squandered in that way. But no one saw you around the house, and so you must keep still about it."

"You bet I'll keep still!" affirmed Lon, who, although badly frightened, was still greatly surprised to hear his father talk in way; "I haven't lisped it to a living soul!"

"We will wait and see what time will bring to us," said Mr. Barry. "I have a little influence with the men around here, and I may be able to keep you out of trouble. Don't say any more to me now; I want to be alone."

There were a multitude of questions that Lon wanted to ask his father, but he saw it would be useless to propound them just then. He got upon his feet, but did not go into the

house; instead, he went to the tool-shed, against which he had leaned his wheel, and, mounting it, posted off as quickly as he could go, to have an interview with Elmer Payne. His father watched him as long as he remained in sight, and then began pacing the walk in front of the chairs.

“No doubt the boys will deny everything, and I am going to help them,” thought Mr. Barry. “It is something I don’t like to do, but where so much is at stake I must bestir myself. I do not believe anybody will accuse me of setting fire to Pet’s house, and I was hoping my incendiarism would end with that; but I must try Frank’s house to-night. He keeps that account-book of Pet’s stowed away in the box, on top of the money that my boy is supposed to have stolen from him, does he? If this thing should ever come out on me——”

Here Mr. Barry seated himself in one of the chairs, threw off his hat, and rested his head on his hands. He did not like to think of what would happen to him if his wrongdoing should become known.

"Elmer, you are just the one I want to see," said Lon, as he turned into the gate and ran across the boy he was in search of.

"Well, here I am," replied Elmer; "I was just going to get on my wheel, to go over and see what was the matter with you. What ails you, old fellow?—what's the matter?"

"Let us get away where we can talk without danger of being overheard," answered Lon; and the tone in which he spoke made Elmer look at him sharper than ever. "Oh, Elmer!" he continued, "the whole thing is out on us!"

"What do you mean?" asked the latter.

"What do I mean?" repeated Lon; "you don't know anything about it, don't you? I mean about the money we stole from Pet Wheelock."

"No!" exclaimed Elmer.

"But it is, I tell you; and Pet has found the money. Now what's to be done? Father told me about it just now."

"Your father? Good gracious!"

"Yes; Pet was down here and told him about it—I don't see how else he could have

found it out. He says he is going to put father in jail—and you and me, into the bargain.”

“Why, what has your father done?” asked Elmer, so surprised at the many things happening that he hardly knew what to say.

“Pet wants a settlement with him,” replied Lon. “And will you believe it when I tell you he has an account against father of eleven thousand dollars?”

“Well, Lon, I knew it was a good deal of money,” said Elmer, after hesitating a little; you know he deposited three thousand dollars with your father at one pop.”

“But think of eleven thousand dollars!—that is more money than Pet ever saw. There’s a way for us to get out of our scrape, though.”

“That’s what I like to hear,” declared Elmer, who was glad to know there was some way in which to get clear of what they had done. “How can we work it?”

“All we have to do is to deny everything—we don’t know a thing about it.”

“You’re sure you haven’t told anything?” asked Elmer, looking sharply at Lon.

"Mighty clear of me," asserted Lon, who just then forgot that he had answered all the questions his father had asked him. "Let father go to Pet and ask him about it, and we'll swear we were not near his house during that day. We'll never get into any more trouble in that house—it was burned, yesterday."

"I wish it had been burned a week ago! Who set it on fire?"

"I don't know; it may have caught owing to Pet's carelessness. But it has gone up; and I say, let it go."

This was the beginning of a long talk the boys had together; but the only conclusion they arrived at was, they wished they had that week to live over again—they would keep clear of poachers and Pet's money.

But the old sailor was not troubled in this way at all. On reaching Frank's house he was surprised to see the boy dressed up, as if he were going to town. Had Pet looked closely, he would have observed that the inside pocket of Frank's coat bulged out more than usual, and if he could have seen its con-

tents he would have discovered his money and account-book there. Frank did not intend to be troubled with that money any longer—he was going to take it to the bank; but he did not think it necessary to consult Pet on the matter, knowing that the old sailor was down on all banks because one occasionally failed.

“Halloo, my hearty!” exclaimed Pet—
“going somewhere?”

“Yes; but I am able to attend to you,” answered Frank. “Did you see Mr. Barry?”

“Yes, sir, I did; and I didn’t have the pleasantest kind of a talk with him, either. There’s one thing I forgot to ask you, this morning: when I put up my new house——”

“Go down on our grounds and take your pick of the place,” interrupted Frank. “Is that what you wanted to ask me?”

“Yes; and I’m a thousand times obliged to you. What rent are you going to charge me?”

Frank did not think it necessary to reply to Pet. He bid his mother good-by and started off without saying a word to the old sailor. Pet looked at him as he passed

through the gate, and then turned and looked at Mrs. Ingram.

"You know we would not charge you anything," said she; "we will only be too glad to have you as a near neighbor."

"I thought that was what he meant," replied the old sailor; "I am much obliged to you."

"I say, Pet," shouted Frank, coming back to the gate at that moment—"where's your furniture?"

"Down there in the woods."

"Well, bring it up and put it in the woodshed, so that it will be out of the rain, if any comes up. Don't sling your hammock to-night; you are going to sleep in the house."

"Not much, I won't!" declared Pet, in reply; "I have slept in a hammock so long that I couldn't get into a bed if I should try."

Frank pretended he did not hear this reply and kept on down the road. After he got out of sight, the old sailor hunted up the hand-cart and disappeared with it. When it was nearly dark they met again, and by that time Pet had all his furniture under cover; but

there was no hammock to be seen. Frank looked all around, but could not find it.

"He thinks he's smart—Frank does," said the old sailor, with a knowing wink at Bob, who had by that time got up and was ready to go on watch. "He don't see the hammock, and he thinks I haven't brought it."

"Where did you put it?" whispered Bob.

"I would as soon tell Frank as you," replied Pet. "It's safe, and there it will stay until I get ready to go to bed."

Pet ate supper in the house that night, and afterward filled his pipe and sat on the porch until bedtime. When he heard the clock strike nine he jumped up and prepared to go to his quarters.

"Two bells!" cried he, "and I ought to have been in bed at eight! I wish you all a kind good-night."

"There's a bed upstairs all ready for you," said Frank.

"I know it, but I like my hammock better. I call all idlers at two bells in the morning."

With these words Pet disappeared around the house in the direction of the woodshed.

CHAPTER XXV.

MR. BARRY MAKES A SETTLEMENT.

“**I** SWAN to man! Things have come to a nice pass when a man is not allowed to sleep in his own quarters. Everything is so very strange here that one can’t go off in slumber just when he likes. I guess I’ll get up.”

It was about twelve o’clock, and for three long hours Pet Wheelock had tossed about in his hammock, unable to close his eyes. It was not want of ventilation, for the woodshed door was open, and he could see everything going on outside; but there was something foreign to his usual manner of sleeping and he could not get used to it. As he spoke he straightened up in his hammock, groped for his trousers, which were lying across the foot of the bed, and started out barefooted. But first he filled his pipe, and then he left the woodshed with his usual hop—his wooden

leg, which he had unstrapped when he went to bed, remaining on the floor.

"I won't sleep at all to-night," muttered the old sailor, as he hopped along in the direction of the chicken-house, and sat down by the side of a currant-bush to enjoy his pipe; "and it all comes of my thinking so much of them boys. Now I'll try and think out who set my house on fire. I know somebody went there with fire in his hand, but who was it?"

This was something he could not fathom. He laid the blame wholly upon "old man Barry;" but what could he prove against the man, who had not been seen in the neighborhood for long months, not even when he came there to see about making a settlement? Pet knew he must get better evidence than that before he could make a move toward arresting him.

"Now, then, what's that?" thought he, when he had reached this point in his meditations. "It sounds like somebody walking on the gravel."

Pet did not raise up at once and alarm the intruder, for he had learned a trick worth

two of that. He wanted to see who it was, and discover, if possible, what business the unknown visitor had about the premises. He was effectually concealed by the currant-bush, but he drew himself into a still smaller compass, if possible; and hardly had he done so before the man—for it was a man, and nothing else—came into view.

“Hold easy, there!” muttered Pet. “Oh! I wish I had two good legs! I would overhaul him so quick that it would make his head swim! What is that he has in his hand? I swan to man! it’s a coal-oil can!”

Filled with wonder, the old sailor continued to watch the prowler, who seemed to be anxious to keep out of sight of anyone who might be stirring in the house, moving in the deep darkness of the evergreens as far as he could, and finally stopping and standing motionless. Pet became both angry and alarmed, for that coal-oil can seemed to show that the fellow had come there for a purpose.

“Does the mean skunk calculate to set fire to the house?” he asked himself. “Well, he won’t succeed this time. It’s a lucky

thing for me that I brought my hammock out here."

At the end of a few moments the man seemed to be satisfied that his approach had not been discovered, and he came cautiously out from beneath the evergreens and moved toward the house. He went directly under Frank's window, and proceeded to unburden his pockets of what proved to be small sticks of kindling-wood, together with a newspaper, which he folded up and placed with the wood against the house. Pet's anger gave way to the most intense astonishment. He thought he saw something about the man that he recognized. His coat was of a cut that Pet had never seen on him before, being so long that it came down to his heels; his hat was worn in the most rowdy way, and was pulled down over his forehead; but still there was something about him—in his actions more than in anything else—which led the old sailor to believe that he had seen the man before.

"I declare, if that ain't old man Barry I never saw him!" said Pet, rubbing his eyes

and looking again. "If I could only see his face! I believe the old fellow means to set fire to the house!"

That was very evident. After placing the newspaper and kindling-wood to his satisfaction the skulker straightened up, seized the oil-can, and emptied its contents over the pile he had built. Then he felt in his pocket for a match; but when he drew it across a stone Pet arose to his feet, went hopping across the yard toward him, and shouted,

"Look here, old man Barry! you had better go somewhere else and start a bonfire!"

The man jumped as if he had been shot. He turned around, and there was the old sailor within a few feet of him. There was but one course for him to pursue, and that was to get away from there; and he did it, too, without the loss of a moment.

"Oh, I know you, old man Barry!" shouted Pet; "you're the man who has been kicking up such a fuss here! Frank—ahoy! Ahoy! Ahoy! Old man Barry has been here, and is trying to burn you out!"

Pet shouted out the words as if he were hail-

ing the masthead in stormy weather. There was a commotion in the room above, and in a minute more the curtain was thrust aside and Frank's head appeared at the open window.

"What's up, Pet?" inquired a sleepy voice.

"Don't I tell you that old man Barry has been here?" cried Pet, in reply. "But get up, and see how near he came to burning you out of house and home. Oh, how I wish I had two good legs! I could have caught him as easy as falling off a log."

Frank waited to hear no more. He drew in his head, struck a light, and by the time Pet got around to the back porch Frank opened the door and came out.

"Do you know what you are talking about?" he asked, so surprised that he could scarcely speak plainly.

"Come around here and see for yourself," said the old sailor. "I sat down there near the chicken-coop, behind that currant-bush, and saw him do it all."

"Why, Pet, I don't understand the meaning of this!" exclaimed Frank, after he had

examined the pile of kindling-wood with the coal-oil poured over it.

"What's the matter, Frank?" inquired his mother, from the back porch.

"Had I better tell her or not?" whispered Frank. "She won't sleep a wink after this."

"Yes; tell her all," answered Pet; "she will have to hear it some time, and you might as well let her know it now as an hour later."

Frank went around to the back porch to tell his mother what he had seen, while Pet stood and puffed his pipe vigorously and looked at the pile the incendiary had prepared.

Some time elapsed before Frank left his mother, and when he returned to where Pet was he acted as though he had lost the last thing on earth there was worth living for.

"The next time you want anything of this kind told mother you can do it yourself," said he; but he did not seem to be angry over it—he only appeared to be sorry. "She cried as if her heart would break," he continued, seating himself on the steps.

"Well, I swan to man!" exclaimed Pet. "What did she cry for?"

“To think she had been so sadly mistaken in Mr. Barry,” replied Frank. “He was very good to us while the mortgage was overdue, and often told mother that if she needed the money for any purpose she was at liberty to use it, for the want of money was something that did not trouble him at all. But to think that he should go to work and burn your house, and then try to destroy ours because your account-book is here and he didn’t want it to appear as evidence against him——”

“Frank, that’s the very thing!” exclaimed Pet, utterly astonished. “He was in hopes he would burn that account-book up! Well, he can’t get it now.”

“You’re right, he can’t, unless he can whip all the officers of the bank. There’s where your money is—and your account-book, too.”

“Now, Frank,” began the old sailor, “I——”

“I know what you are about to say, and it will keep until to-morrow. I won’t have charge of your money any longer. The money is in the bank to your credit, and if

you don't like what I have done with it you can go there and draw it out. Now, I want you to tell me how you saw that man, and all about it."

Pet had half a mind to get angry at Frank. He squared himself, lifted both his clenched hands and flourished them over his head, and was about to break out in regular fore-castle style, when he caught a glimpse of Frank's face and stopped. He looked at him a moment, then turned and hopped off toward the place where he had been sitting when Mr. Barry first appeared. Then he entered into the story, giving the minutest details; and when he told how he had interrupted the incendiary in his work he hopped along over the ground so rapidly that Frank could scarcely keep up with him.

"Where is Mr. Barry now?" asked Frank.

"Well, I reckon he took himself safe off," answered Pet; "that's what I should have done if I had been caught in the act."

"You know it was Mr. Barry, do you?"

"Well, I swan to man! Haven't I met him all these years, and seen him every day, and

do you think I would mistake his figure-head?" ejaculated the old sailor. "Of course I know it was old man Barry. Now, Frank, what is to be done? Will you set the law a-going against him?"

"We have several hours before daylight comes, and we'll take a sleep on it," replied Frank.

"If you do, he'll get safe off; your mother won't agree to it. And that boy won't get sent up for stealing my money."

"Well, if mother says so, don't you think it would be a good plan to follow? He could have turned us out of house and home at any time he felt like it."

*Pet did not know what reply to make to this. He did not believe that Mr. Barry could escape the penalty of his misdeeds, for there was a grand jury to sit some time the next month, and perhaps they would have something to say about it.

"Yes; if your mother thinks so, I believe it's all right," answered the old sailor, after turning the thing over in his mind. "But I do think this family ought to be punished."

"Well, let us sleep on it; maybe you will be of a different opinion before morning."

"If I didn't think the grand jury would take this thing up I shouldn't be so willing to agree to that," thought Pet to himself, as he got into his hammock. "Now, how is old man Barry going to get out of it? That's what's bothering me."

Bob came home as usual to breakfast, and when he heard the story of the night's exploit on the part of Mr. Barry, and saw the preparations he had made to set their house on fire, he was fierce for punishing the would-be incendiary, and was provoked at Frank because he would not say at once that he was going down to see Mr. Wright about it.

"I bet you, if I had been in Pet's place he wouldn't have escaped as easily as he did. And you fellows are going to let him off!" exclaimed Bob, angrily. "You have all the evidence you want. Pet called the man by name, and that is all he needs. I tell you, Barry will get out of it in some way."

"There's nothing he can do, that I can see, unless we let up on him," said Frank. "Of

course, if mother says so, it will have to be done."

When breakfast was over, Frank and Pet shouldered their axes and started for the wood-lot to pick out a suitable place for the old sailor's new house. Of course Bob went with them, for he was so excited that he could not think of sleeping. Each one knew where he was going, and in a few minutes they stopped on a little rise of ground from which a broad expanse of the bay was visible, and there Frank seated himself on a fallen log.

"Here's the very spot," said he. "You have a much better view here than you had at your old house, and a sailor always likes a sight of the water. That little patch of evergreens will do for a windbreak from the southeastern gales that prevail here during the winter, and by some clearing a good, substantial garden can be made. What do you think of it, Pet?"

"I'll take the spot, and thank you besides," answered the old sailor. "Now you go home and behave yourselves, as good boys ought to, and I'll begin clearing at once."

The boys paid no attention to this order. They threw off their coats, placed them on the log, and Frank began cutting some bushes that were in the way, while Bob hauled them together and made a bonfire.

"We are going to stay here until you get your house up," remarked Frank.

"Why, ain't you going fishing?" asked Pet.

"No, sir—not to-day. The sign is in the feet; and when the sign is there, you want to keep your hook clear of the water."

It was ten o'clock before they knew it, and Frank was thinking about ordering Bob to the house to bring a pail of water, when, happening to cast his eye along the path by which they had come in the morning, he saw Mr. Barry approaching. The old gentleman held in his hand a valise, of which he seemed to take especial care. Close behind him, with his eyes fastened on the ground, came Lon, who brightened up and looked at the boys when his father spoke to him.

"Well, this beats me!" declared Frank, in a low tone. "Wouldn't it be a good plan to punch that fellow?"

"I swan to man!" was all that Pet could say.

Bob was so amazed that he kept silent.

The newcomers were walking briskly, and kept on until they found they had been observed, when a smile came to their faces, and Mr. Barry began talking while yet at such a distance that he had to raise his voice to be understood.

"Good-morning!" said he. "You are hard at work clearing off a spot to build a new house on, are you? I was dreadfully cut up when I heard about his old home going up in smoke. I hope you did not lose much, Pet. How do you do, this morning?"

Mr. Barry had now got close to the boys, and stretched out his hand to Frank, which, after a little hesitation, he shook cordially. Bob did just as his brother did, although it would have afforded him much more pleasure to give the man a good trouncing. The visitor kept on until he got to Pet. The latter dropped his axe, rolled his sleeves up as high as they could go, puffed out his cheeks, and acted very much as if he intended to take Mr.

Barry by the collar, but he looked toward Frank in time, and receiving a scarcely perceptible nod from him, suddenly thrust out his hand, which was as limp as though there was not a particle of life in it.

"Did you lose much, Pet?" asked Mr. Barry, who was evidently very much relieved on receiving this recognition from the old sailor. "Well, if you did, it doesn't matter, for you have money enough to get all the furniture you want, and a dozen times over. And here's Lon, who came up with me to make it all right with you regarding the stealing of your money the other day."

"Oh, he has, has he?" exclaimed Pet, who was too much astonished to say more. "Well, if he took that money——"

"He took it for a joke," interrupted Mr. Barry. "The boys were going to put it back where they found it, but you came home from fishing just at the wrong time, and they were afraid to return it lest you would see them."

"Did he break the lid of my box for a joke, too?" inquired Pet, who grew angry again.

"No," said Lon, who now spoke for the first time; "I put my knife under it to ease the lid, and it broke before I was aware of it."

"Oh, it did, did it?" exclaimed the old sailor, advancing a step or two nearer to Lon, who grew as white as the shirt he had on. "For two cents I would teach you——"

Pet stopped and looked at Frank, on whose face there was an expression which showed he did not approve of Pet's actions at all, so he finally turned and went back to the log, where he seated himself.

"There, now; I think we are all right," said Mr. Barry, with a smile, "and I guess I can go on with my business. Pet," he continued, taking hold of the valise and producing a key from his pocket, "I looked over your account after you left me, and I found where I made my mistake. You were right, and I was wrong. I had so much to attend to that I frequently forgot to put down the amount you gave me, and so I thought it over, and—and—you're right. I have been down to the bank, and brought the bills up here, for I know you do not like a check."

As Mr. Barry spoke he opened the valise, and disclosed to the view of the astonished boys more money than any of them had ever before seen. He stepped back, and seemed to enjoy their surprise. He and Lon tried to read in the boys' faces what they were thinking of, but there was nothing but astonishment there.

"Shall I go over it with you and see if it is all right?" asked Mr. Barry. "I think you may safely take it, for it is right from the hands of the cashier."

"No, it will not be necessary to count it over," said Frank, for Pet was completely bewildered. "In Pet's name I thank you for making this settlement with him."

"Oh, that's all right; but you see, I wanted to know that the amount was correct before I turned it over. It is a fine day,—isn't it? Good-morning!"

Mr. Barry and Lon left the valise there on the ground and were quickly lost to sight in the woods, while the brothers looked at each other, not knowing what to say. Presently Pet started up from the log as if a sur-

prising idea had occurred to him. He ran to the valise, tore it open, ran his fingers over the topmost roll, and found nothing but ten-dollar bills in it.

“Who-pee!” he shouted, jumping to his feet in an ecstasy of rage. “There’s nothing but big bills in there, and some of them are bad!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

WE left Perkins in Russell's boat, held up by river pirates; he had seen them gather up the barrel that contained Frank's ambergris and toss it overboard, and there was not a sailboat or a vessel in sight that he could call upon for help. He had remained speechless ever since witnessing the wanton act—he could not have spoken if he had tried; but when the tide seized the prize, and carried it out toward the ocean from which it had come, he drew a long breath and slowly sank back in the stern-sheets. With its loss his chances of being sentenced for but a short term in the State's prison had vanished like the mists of the morning.

“Now you've done it!” he exclaimed.

“Well, we don't want that offal aboard this boat!” declared one of the pirates. “Get away from there, and I'll take your place at

the helm. You have some money with you, and you might just as well haul it out."

"I haven't got a cent!" replied Perkins; and to show that he was in earnest about it he turned his pockets inside out.

"You fellows sometimes have a ditty-bag, in which you carry your money," continued the pirate, seizing Perkins by the bosom of his shirt and shaking him roughly. "Unbutton your shirt."

Perkins complied, but there was nothing there. The man growled out something about his being a poor fisherman who would come out on the bay without any money, and took Perkins's seat at the stern of his boat.

"Where are you going to take me, any way?" asked the latter.

"Over to Brooklyn—that will be a good place for you."

"But how can I get home from there? It's eighty miles to where I live."

"It won't hurt you to walk that distance, will it? Now, keep a civil tongue in your head or you'll go overboard, after that barrel!"

Perkins gave up his seat and went forward

to where he could keep his eyes on the prize, which soon disappeared from sight. Then he turned around, and, after casting a keen look on the pirates, allowed his thoughts to wander off to Frank. He wondered how the boy would take the news of his loss—and he was the only one who could communicate it to him. The sea had it once more, and there it would remain until some fellow who knew more about such things than the pirates did should pick it up, and enrich himself by the act.

“Well, I’ve done the best I could; and now Frank will punish me for what these pirates have done,” sighed Perkins. “Ten years in the State’s prison!—that seems a long time. I wish I had never heard of Russell!”

Perkins was very much disheartened—so much so that he paid little attention to where he was going until the wharves of Brooklyn appeared in sight. The pirate who was handling the helm evidently knew what he was doing, for with a single sweep he brought his boat’s broadside up to one of the wharves and ordered the pretended fisherman to climb out.

"This is as far as we can take you," said he. "And mark you—not one word to the police of Brooklyn about what happened out there on the bay. If you squeal we'll hear of it; and if you want to see your home again you had better mind what I'm telling you."

"I'm mighty glad I got rid of you with my life!" answered Perkins, as he made all haste to climb onto the wharf; "I wouldn't take such a ride with you fellows again for double what that boat is worth!"

"You're safe now, but be careful that you don't say a word to the police," was the reply.

"I shall do as I please about that," said Perkins to himself, as he fastened his eyes upon the sailboat and continued to follow it. "You fellows are going to steal that boat, are you? Well, you may tie it up to-night, but you won't find it in the morning."

We may tell the reader, in passing, that it was very far from Perkins's idea of appealing to the police for assistance in recovering his lost sailboat. He dreaded the questions he knew the officers would ask him regarding

the manner in which he came into possession of the boat, for he had stolen it himself; and, besides, he had assisted in stealing the ambergris from Frank Ingram, and he was afraid the authorities might come into a knowledge of that also. His only desire was to keep the sailboat in sight until the pirates tied up for the night, and then he would steal it again and make the best of his way homeward.

"I guess that's about the only thing I can do," thought he, making various twists and turns about the wharves to keep the boat in sight. "I don't want to see any officers again as long as I live. They question a fellow too much."

It was hard work to keep the sail in view, for now and then there was a creek or a slip which ran across his path, and it was necessary that he should find a bridge in order to cross it. This usually took him a long distance out of his road, and sometimes he found it impossible to retain sight of the sail without running. He met two or three police officers while on his way, and these always turned and looked at him suspiciously, but none of them

had anything to say to him. The course of the boat was seaward, but the time consumed in returning to shore enabled Perkins to reach a point about opposite her probable landing-place.

“You’ll come ashore pretty soon, now,” said he to himself, taking off his hat and mopping the perspiration from his face, “for all the wharves end here, and there’s nothing but some little shanties on the beach. There’s no people in them,” he added—“nobody but some children, and they won’t bother me, I reckon.”

That was just the place that both boats were bound for. First the river pirate and then the captured boat stood toward the beach, and finally drew up together, while Perkins concealed himself behind a warehouse, to watch what they were going to do. The pirates, after holding a short consultation, stepped out of the vessels, and after drawing them up on the beach went off together.

“I must steal it now or go without it,” muttered Perkins. “The tide is ebbing fast, and unless I get to work pretty soon the boat will

be half a mile from water; then it would take all the men who could get around her to launch it."

Perkins was very much excited now, but he did not show it as much as Russell would have done had he been in like circumstances. He followed the men until he was satisfied they were bound up town, and then went back to the beach as rapidly as he could. There was no one to interfere with his movements. He cast off the painter, which had been made fast to a sunken anchor on the beach, waded into the water up to his waist in order to shove the boat adrift, then climbed in and began hoisting the sail. While thus engaged he kept an eye on the beach for fear the pirates might return, but no signs of them were to be seen. At the end of fifteen minutes his sail was full of a good, stiff breeze, and he took his seat at the helm, all ready to begin his homeward journey.

"I declare," he mused, taking a farewell look at the beach, "I don't believe that thing was ever done before—cutting out a sailboat in broad daylight! If this boat is as good as

she used to be, I would like to see them catch me !”

It was all Perkins could do to keep from shouting over his success. There were still a few hours of daylight left, and as long as the wharves of Brooklyn remained in sight he kept a close watch on them, but nothing suspicious met his gaze. After an hour or two had passed in this way he thought his escape was assured, and his mind once more wandered to Frank. Perkins was really sorry that he would have to go back without taking the ambergris with him—sorry on the boy’s account, and more so on his own.

“I can’t look for him to shield me in the examination that’s coming,” thought he. “They do say that if a fellow gives up what he has stolen, and tells them all about it, he’ll get off as free as the judge can let him ; but in this case——”

While Perkins was meditating in this way he kept his gaze fastened upon a boat that was approaching him, with a view of getting out of her way, when he saw something rise on the swell which she carried before her, and

after raking along her side finally disappear in her wake. It looked like a barrel; and, furthermore, it was painted red, and that was the color of Frank Ingram's barrel. He did not suspect anything, but at the same time he turned toward it with the object of taking a nearer look at it.

"It would be just my luck—no, it would be Frank's luck, if he was here—to find his ambergris again after it had been thrown overboard," said Perkins, mentally, rising to his feet so that he could see the inside of the flotsam. "No such good luck ever happens to me. I suppose the stuff has fallen out before this time, but I'll take a look, anyhow."

A sweep of the boat's helm, now that she was out of reach of the other vessel, soon brought her up to the object, and Perkins, leaving the tiller, caught up his boat-hook. A little turn was enough. He drew the barrel toward him, and in it was the ambergris! Though almost ready to faint with joy, after a moment's struggle with himself he drew it closer alongside, thrust his hands into it and smelt them, and the perfume struck his nos-

trills with a sense that made him thrill all over.

“I swan to man!” stammered Perkins.

Dropping his boat-hook, he seized the prize with both hands and lifted it out of the water. This was not easily done, for the ambergris weighed one hundred and thirty pounds. He poured out the salt water and again examined the contents, to make sure his eyes did not deceive him, up-ended the barrel, and seated himself at the helm again. He looked toward the Brooklyn shore, but there was no sign of the pirates being in sight.

“Well, I swan to man!” was all that Perkins could say.

There was but one thing now uppermost in his mind, and that was to reach home and deliver the ambergris to its rightful owner. With this object in view he crowded his vessel until she almost stood on her side; but he did not neglect to cast anxious glances behind and on both sides of him, to make sure he was alone. It grew dark before he was out of the way of passing vessels, and he gave his whole time to navigating his craft, for

there was a break in the bar into which he must turn to reach his home. The breeze increased, but he was in too great a hurry to take in sail, and when the break was reached he narrowly escaped being swamped. But he passed it in safety, and just as the sun was rising he drew up to the buoy to which Russell's skiff was fastened.

"Well, here I am!" he soliloquized, with intense satisfaction. "Now it remains for Frank to say whether I'm going to suffer or not for stealing his catch."

Russell's skiff was soon loaded with the ambergris, and Perkins began to row toward the beach. He took care to run the bow of his boat high up on it before he left it, and after a few minutes' run—for he was in so great a hurry that he couldn't walk—he mounted Frank's steps and pounded loudly on the door. Frank was already up and engaged in kindling a fire, and the door was opened almost as soon as he had ceased knocking.

"I don't wonder that you are not pleased to see me," said Perkins, as Frank started in

surprise at the sight of him, "but I have good news for you, if I never brought you any before. Your ambergris is safe!"

"What—what did you say?" exclaimed Frank.

"Your ambergris is safe!" repeated Perkins. "Get your hand-cart, and I'll go with you and help you bring it up."

"Where is it?"

"It's down in my boat. I had a time getting it here, but it's your own, now, to keep."

Frank was astonished and bewildered by this unexpected turn of events, and it was some time before he could understand the matter; but when he fairly got it through his head that his ambergris was safe at last, it almost took his breath away. He did not act as Perkins did when he discovered the barrel afloat, but he felt like it. He thought he would not go in and tell his mother of it just then—it would be time enough for her to know it when he brought the ambergris to the house.

"I'll not trouble you to go back to the beach with me," said Frank, speaking as calmly as

he usually did. "Pet is down there clearing away some brush, and he'll give me all the help I need."

"Then I'll go home and get some breakfast, and then I'll surrender myself to Mr. Wright," said Perkins. "Do you know what he'll do with me?"

"He'll be as easy on you as he can," replied Frank. "When I get my hand-cart, I want you to tell me what sort of a time you had in getting the ambergris home."

Frank was absent but a few minutes, and when he returned, pushing the hand-cart before him, Perkins began his story; and he was not obliged to tell anything but the truth, either, about his thrilling experiences with the river pirates. When Frank saw Perkins go toward his home he turned down the path that led to the beach, and for want of something better to while away the time he struck up a lively whistle. He found Pet busy with his work; and so very much engaged was he with it that he had not noticed the sailboat come into the harbor, nor the skiff when she made a landing on the beach.

"Halloo!" exclaimed the old sailor—"what's come over you all of a sudden?"

"Do you see that skiff down there?" asked Frank, in reply.

"Well, yes—I see it now, but I didn't see it before."

"Do you see the barrel that's in it?"

"Why, good gracious, Frank!—has your ambergris come back?"

"I'm going down there to see; come along."

Pet did not need any second invitation. He dropped his axe and fell in behind Frank, who pushed that hand-cart along at a faster rate than it had ever travelled before. When he had almost reached the skiff he dropped the cart and ran forward, drawing the barrel toward him. One look was enough.

"Who-pee!" he shouted, giving vent to Pet's exclamation; "it's all here, safe and sound!"

"Why, how—how——" stammered Pet.

"Take hold and help me get it up to the house," interrupted Frank. "I'll tell you all about it as we go along."

They were half an hour in taking the am-

bergris up to the house, for Frank was often obliged to stop and explain things to the old sailor, who acted as though he did not believe more than half of it. When they reached the back porch, there stood his mother, and Frank was forced to go over his story again. Mrs. Ingram came down and looked at the ambergris, and it was all she could do to keep from crying, while Pet backed up to the nearest step and sat down.

“Do you want to know what my opinion of that tale is?” said he, when Frank had finished his story. “There isn’t a word of truth in it from beginning to end!”

That was what they all thought; and Bob, when he came home to breakfast, did not hesitate to say so, only he put it in rather stronger language; but finally they concluded to drop it. The ambergris was there, and that was all Frank cared to know about it.

The boys’ first care was to get the material away from there and place it in the hands of the manufacturing chemists. There might be some more Russells and Perkinses around there, and they did not want to give them a

chance to steal it; so after a very light breakfast the barrel was headed up again, with Pet's assistance, and with Bob for company they set out for New York. When they arrived in Brooklyn a dray was hired to take it across the ferry and to the store of Arland & Wakeman, where they found the man they wanted to see.

"Here's your ambergris, sir," said Frank, as the drayman brought the barrel in. "Circumstances over which I had no control prevented me from bringing it on the day I said I would, but here it is."

Mr. Wakeman listened in surprise while Frank told him of what the barrel had been through, and by the time he finished he had quite an interested audience listening to him. The barrel was taken into a rear room and then the ambergris lifted out, and Mr. Wakeman said that it was the very article they wanted.

"There's more of it than you said there was," he remarked, turning to Frank. "You said the barrel was half full, but I find it more than two-thirds full. Suppose I say

three thousand dollars for this? Will you take it?"

"Yes, sir; and be glad to."

"Will you take a check?"

"If it is just as convenient to you, I should prefer to have the money."

A clerk was sent to the bank, and Frank saw the money counted out to him. In an hour they were on their way back home. But they did not go there immediately; they first went to the bank, and the cashier opened his eyes when Frank laid the bills down, with a request that a bank-book be made out in favor of his mother. It was made out in due time, and when Frank got home he laid the book in his mother's lap.

"That is a fisherboy's luck!" said he. "I have often told you that old ocean had a fortune in store for me, but you always laughed at it. Well, there it is."

After he had his money all safe, Frank was a happy boy. His next care was to settle with Mr. Wright, and after some chaffing the sheriff told him that ten dollars would about cover the bill, and Frank was glad to pay it.

The next thing was to decide what Frank was going to do. He must give up fishing—that much was settled. After a long talk that evening, during which Pet bore an important part, Bob sat down and wrote a letter to Mr. Adams, recommending a boy suitable to fill his place as watchman over his grounds, while the old sailor left the room in disgust. He was not satisfied at all with the arrangements that had been made in regard to himself—he was to give up his new home entirely and take the boys' place under Mrs. Ingram's roof. The boys were to go to Brooklyn and enter a commercial college, and when they had graduated they would be fitted for something a little higher in the world than being fishermen.

There was something that created quite an excitement in the family, and that was the trial of Russell and Perkins. Although the grand jury took hold of the case, there was nothing said about poaching, nor of the exploit of Lon and Elmer in robbing Pet Wheelock. Frank always supposed that Mr. Barry was in some way interested in it, but he

did not say so out loud. He paid the mortgage to Mrs. Russell in the poacher's presence, and thus got a heavy burden off his mind. At the trial Russell was sentenced to four years in Auburn and Perkins to one year, and it is to be hoped that during their imprisonment they will learn that it is a good plan to keep away from other people's property. Shortly after the trial, as if to confirm Frank in his suspicions, Mr. Barry made preparations to move away from Long Island. He went somewhere, but nobody, not even Elmer Payne, knows where he is living.

Frank and Bob are at the commercial college now, and this time the former is not going to say of himself that he did not pay some attention to his books. They come home every Friday afternoon, go back early on Monday morning, and are too busy with their studies to be homesick. Pet is always ready to greet them, and he has become used at last to living in another house; but he still sleeps in the woodshed. The boys are certain that by the time the winter's snow comes he will think it best to occupy the room prepared for him.

His money, too, is in the bank, and he is perfectly willing to leave it there. He is always ready to tell the boys stories of his ocean life; but what he likes best to relate to others are those concerning the "Floating Treasure."

C02539834

RENEWALS 458-4574
DATE DUE

FEB 18

B

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

